

# The Small German Courts in the Eighteenth Century

'The majority of the German Courts are        old  
castles where one seeks amusement.'

VOLTAIRE

THE  
SMALL GERMAN COURTS  
in the Eighteenth Century



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## Foreword

The idea of this book came to me on one of the several journeys I made with the express purpose of visiting the palaces and castles built by the German princes during the eighteenth century

Wandering through these palaces, alternately pompous replicas of Louis XIV châteaux, or endowed with that grace so characteristic of the Louis XV period, strolling through parks now formal as the classic prototypes of Le Nôtre, now artless and neglected in the English manner, or filled with unexpected chinoiserie, my initial curiosity soon became an obsession. The visitor is eager to know more of the creators of these magnificent domains, frames from which the pictures have vanished, than he can learn from the vague and usually erroneous information given by the guides. He would like a glimpse into the private lives of the figures who dwell in them, and who perhaps deserve to be rescued from oblivion.

I had already been struck by a phrase Voltaire wrote in a letter to his niece, Mme Denis: 'The majority of the German Courts to-day are like those of the ancient Paladins. They are old castles where one seeks amusement. One finds there pretty ladies-in-waiting, handsome bachelors, they engage mountebanks.'<sup>1</sup>

I was anxious to pursue my researches in a subject which I already had vaguely in mind, when I came across Heinrich Heine's appreciation of the vast work—it comprises no fewer than forty-four volumes—on the German courts by the Austrian, Vehse. It appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. 'The Germans,' he says, 'will at last meet their princes face to face. What a superb menagerie of highly original animals. . . true masterpieces of the Good Lord in which He has given free reign to poetic fantasy and an author's talent which fills me with admiration. No human artist could have conceived such figures, neither a Shakespeare nor a Raupach. We can only see in them the handiwork of God.'

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Berlin, dated 22nd August 1750

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And sure enough, day by day as I continued my investigations, I saw arise from the past, complementing certain well-known characters, princely figures who in their eccentricity surpassed my wildest hopes. In their retinues could be found a number of Germanic types such as we are wont to conceive them: the churlish roisterer always ready to draw his sword, the cynic entirely preoccupied with his selfish pleasures, the scholar covered with dust from the libraries meditating upon some system of philosophy, the man of letters or poet in tireless quest of some hazy ideal; and even the forlorn sentimental youth walking with doleful sighs in the moonlight by the brook. The procession was rounded off by a few women, some beautiful and gracious, in love with literature and art; others violent, ambitious, sensual and depraved.

The mass of documents relating to the period enables one to paint highly-coloured pictures which have no claim to represent history, but merely the by-paths of history. Leaving aside the vast political and philosophical developments, I have been content to collect these images and to present the settings and the characters with as little pedantry as possible. In these chronicles of the small German courts I have adhered to the naturalistic, to the anecdote which often affords a better likeness than any reflection of great profundity. Voltaire called the eighteenth century 'the century of trifles'; let us stick to these 'trifles' for they too have their own particular savour.

My sources of information have been mainly the memoirs and autobiographies of contemporary Germans. These publications, it is true, are of only minor importance, since the Germans of the period did not affect this type of literature which abounds in France, where it is unrivalled.

These personal memories can fortunately be completed by the accounts of travellers,<sup>1</sup> and by correspondence between the various princes and their satellites: courtiers, scholars, philosophers, historians, poets, artists.

The originality of this volume will consist in the combing of

<sup>1</sup> Travellers are not always very reliable observers, and Voltaire was of the opinion that in their tales one found the most 'printed lies'.

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numerous German works which in the course of the past fifty years have dealt with this particular subject—works so little known that one might almost say the material is ‘hitherto unpublished’ These huge tomes—they are rarely less than a thousand pages—are both scholarly and conscientious, stuffed with facts and observations on German customs and culture, they are a gold-mine of reference, but their presentation is so confusing and the text so indigestible that they intimidate the most inquisitive.

The study of the eighteenth century is inexhaustible Why does the mind constantly revert to this period, which has the privilege of always remaining attractive? It is because all the characters which made it live, although close to us in time, today seem so different and remote that they are a constant source of entertainment. However small the part they played, it was never an insignificant one

I shall deal with a vanished world, the world whose demise the Prince de Ligne already recorded in his memoirs ‘I have seen the last splendours of Europe . . . I have seen Potsdam, Sans-Souci.

. . . With Prince Charles of Lorraine I saw the fall of the Low Countries, and a pretty, secure court, where there was always frivolity, drinking, dining and hunting . . . I have seen all the courts of the Empire disappear, the fêtes of Duke Karl of Württemberg, the gallantry, the French plays and all the social pleasures at the court of the last Margrave of Bayreuth, the luxury and etiquette of Bonn and Mainz, the solidity and jovialty of the courts of Karlsruhe, Mannheim, Munich, Erlangen, down to the very smallest, that of the last Prince of Thurn and Taxis, which although a trifle ridiculous was no less magnificent And I have nowhere seen replaced in Europe all the great houses of the nobility which had to give up pages, guards and gentlemen-in-waiting, but still maintained a great air of distinction with their footmen, horses, social gatherings, open boards, and occasional diversions . . . I have seen them all disappear ’

Since the days when the Prince de Ligne wrote these disillusioned words, many events have transformed Germany His statement alone renders more precious the memories in stone, and

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the beautiful gardens filled with the sad reveries that a past that will never return invariably evokes

Forewords are rather like virtue: they are necessary but there should not be too much of them. Since the shortest are probably the best, let me proceed to my subject, after carefully defining the background of the characters I propose to portray.



PART I

Germany after the Peace  
of Westphalia



## Germany in the Eighteenth Century



Before presenting the pictures which compose this work it seems to me necessary to give a brief outline—however sketchy and incomplete—of the state of Germany in the eighteenth century. A glance at the political constitution, social structure, living conditions and customs of a country which is so near to us and yet so remote may help the reader to a better understanding of many details which will emerge in the text

‘Germany’, in other words, the Holy Roman Empire of the German People, was a political organism which had no analogy in Europe. It extended from Trieste to the Baltic, from the sources of the Elbe to the Dutch frontier <sup>1</sup> At its head was the European heir to the Crown of Charlemagne and the temporal leader of Christianity, as the Pope was its spiritual leader. In actual fact he was only master of his hereditary Austrian possessions <sup>2</sup> This state

<sup>1</sup> From the political point of view, the Empire had been divided since 1512 into ten ‘circles’ or Reichskreise 1 Austria (belonging to the House of Habsburg) 2 Burgundy (id.) 3 Upper Saxony (comprising Pomerania, Lubeck, Hamburg and Bremen) 4 Lower Saxony 5 Westphalia (comprising Munster, Paderborn, Osnabruck, Cleve, Oldenburg, Liège, Aix-la-Chapelle and Dortmund) 6 The Upper Rhine (with the bishoprics of Basel and Strasbourg, Speyer, Worms and Fulda) 7 The Rhineland (including the four electorates Cologne, Trier, Mainz and the Palatinate) 8 Swabia (with Baden, Wurtemberg, Constance, Augsburg, twenty-three bishoprics and free towns of which Nordlingen, despite its small population, possessed a Senate) 9 Franconia (with Ansbach, Bayreuth, a part of the bishoprics of Wurzburg and Bamberg) 10 Bavaria (including Passau, the free town of Ratisbon and the bishopric of Salzburg)

<sup>2</sup> He received only the revenues, which were considerable, from his Austrian possessions, almost nothing as head of the German Reich and a bare 15,000 florins from the Jews of whom he was the self-declared protector

of affairs caused a conflict of interests between Austria and the Empire which was often apparent. A second opposition arose between the Empire and the states forming the German bloc. While the latter were hereditary, the head of the former was appointed by the Electors. This elective Empire—apart from a few short-lived exceptions—was to a certain extent the hereditary right of the House of Habsburg, reigning in Vienna. There were two main reasons for this in the first place the Electors were inclined to choose their Emperor from among the Austrian princes, considering it proper that the head should have an uncontested authority in his own right and through his family—the Austrian family of course was the most powerful of all the families in Germany. In the second place the wealthy House of Habsburg managed to acquire the majority of the votes, thanks to enormous sums disbursed on the eve of the elections.

Among the elements assembled in the Empire, one finds nine electors, six of them laymen (Bavaria, Bohemia, Saxony, Brandenburg, the Palatinate and Hanover) and three ecclesiastics (Mainz, Cologne and Trier-Coblenz), then a host of principalities, great or small, a certain number of important cities, under the sole jurisdiction of the Emperor, and finally towns which enjoyed autonomy<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The free cities such as Hamburg, Bremen and Lubeck were wealthy as a result of their trade with neighbouring and remote countries. Frankfurt profited greatly from its annual fairs and the influx of visitors to the coronations of the Emperors. Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, during a journey to Germany, in a letter of the 22nd August 1716, points out the differences which existed between the free towns and those governed by absolute sovereigns, 'as is the case in the majority of the small German states' 'In the first', she said, 'there appears an air of commerce and plenty. The streets are well-built, and full of people, neatly and plainly dressed. The shops are loaded with merchandise, and the commonalty clean and cheerful. In the other, a sort of shabby finery, a number of dirty people of quality tawdered out, narrow, nasty streets out of repair, wretchedly thin of inhabitants, and above half of the common sort asking alms.' The free towns, possessing no territory, coveted by the neighbouring princes with whom they had to negotiate, gradually lost their liberties. Cologne, always so jealous of her prerogatives, declined to the point where she was called 'the city of mendicants', Augsburg was absorbed by Bavaria. Only the great northern seaports were to resist progressive encroachments for some time.

## GERMANY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The Thirty Years War (1618-48) swept over Germany like a devastating cyclone, reducing the country to a desert, engulfing thousands of villages, two-thirds of the houses and nine-tenths of the cattle; to the point that, in a country which had previously been flourishing, one could now travel forty miles without finding the trace of a hamlet. Trees sprouted from collapsed roofs, and in market-place of Wiesbaden a wood had grown which became the haunt of rabbits and stags. In the ravaged countryside there were more wild animals than peasants. The population of Württemberg fell from 400,000 to 40,000. Trade was dead and the Hanseatic League dissolved. In this Germany which had fallen to the lowest depths of misery the suicides could no longer be counted.

This tragic period suddenly halted the march of German civilization, with the result that it remained half a century behind France. One might almost say that at about 1650, in this Germanic land thrust back into complete barbarism by a period of murder and pillage, everything had to start afresh: the state, religion, fortunes, society, science, literature and morality. As a result of these unfortunate wars, even the central authority of the Emperor was reduced, whereas the royal power in victorious France increased. In future the Emperor bore but an empty title. According to the Duchess Luise of Saxe-Weimar, he was no longer the 'ruler' of the ancient Germanic Empire but only its 'head of state', and the coronation of the Emperors at Frankfort became that Shrove Tuesday ceremony which Ritter von Lang describes so wittily in his memoirs.

After the Peace of Westphalia (1648) which brought the Thirty Years War to a close, the political status of Germany changed. She became a large autocracy composed of a king, electors, princes and imperial towns. The German princes, whose sovereignty was confirmed, shook off the tutelage of Vienna, encouraged by the support of Louis XIV, who seemed to offer them protection against Austrian hegemony. They made every effort to loosen the bonds which attached them to an emperor who, once considered the uncontested ruler, now appeared to be merely a façade. They learned the secrets of despotism. In future they were to develop a senti-

ment of absolute power and a taste for imposing complete dependence upon their subordinates. Germany was ripe for slavery.

By the Treaties of Westphalia, the Emperor had to deal with a parliament, the Diet, which sat in Ratisbon. The Electors, the princes and the free towns sent their deputies and the Diet represented the democratic element which, in principle, protected the rights of the individual. Justice was dispensed badly everywhere.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor intervened, through the offices of the Diet, to settle conflicts between the states, particularly in questions of finance and taxation. Moreover the decisions of the Diet, which were often as solemn as they were ineffectual, were applied with a slowness which made the progress of affairs difficult in the extreme. The deputies spent most of their time discussing and drinking and did very little real work. According to Frederick II of Prussia, the Diet was 'a kind of phantom' and the delegates whom the princes sent to it were 'barnyard whelps baying at the moon'.

The King of France, who had become the protector of Teutonic liberties against the Empire, reserved the right to be represented at the Diet by a plenipotentiary whose real mission was to observe the work of the assembly and to indulge in a little spying on the spot. In this way the victor also retained a foothold in Germany and a guarantee that the system he had established would be respected. He even went so far as to exploit German anarchy to see that the terms of the Westphalian treaties were rigorously applied in order to manœuvre the Empire for the furtherance of his own interests.

The Thirty Years War left the country in complete chaos from which emerged, in addition to a few electorates of reasonable size, an incredible number of small states 'Indecisive Germany' (Michelet) or rather 'Germanies', as contemporaries called her, was in fact subjected to a parcelling process pushed to its extreme limits. She was chopped, dismembered, pulverized into a dust of

<sup>1</sup> In Germany there were two kinds of tribunal to judge the differences between princes: the *Reichskammergericht* and the *Reichshofrath*, the former sitting in Wetzlar and the latter in Vienna. These tribunals dealt in general with the same cases but the judges, who were often corruptible, sometimes pronounced contradictory sentences. Nevertheless, they put an end to the abuses of authority by small princes in their states.

little principalities, and gave the strange appearance of being an assembly of about two thousand distinct territories some of which were only two or three square leagues in area <sup>1</sup> Eighty of them had an area of less than twelve square leagues but like the great states had royal prerogatives and were free to contract alliances as they pleased <sup>2</sup>

The old feudal constitution hung over this medley of principalities like a moth-eaten cloak worn over a harlequin costume A host of little tyrants, dukes and counts, landgraves, waldgraves, rhinegraves, bishops and abbots, claimed absolute rights as against the Emperor There was no limit to their power Swabia alone comprised 97 sovereigns, 4 ecclesiastical princes (Constance, Augsburg, Kempten, Ellwangen), 14 secular princes (Baden, Württemberg, Fürstenberg, Hohenzollern, Ottingen, etc.), 23 prelates, 25 lords of the manor, 30 Imperial towns (of which Augsburg and Ulm were the most important), and principalities such as Bepfingen with only 1,600 inhabitants and Ruchau with barely 1,000

Many of these princelings could make the tour of their domains in a few hours, and a stag they were hunting might cross into a neighbour's territory This did not prevent them, however, from having the same pretensions as the King of Prussia or the Elector of Bavaria They were animated by the most violent passions and their vanity knew no bounds The Princess Palatine wrote 'the count of Thurn and Taxis tries to pass for a Duke and yet there are dozens like him' <sup>3</sup> Mauvillon maintained. 'there is no small sovereign in the Empire with less than three times as many titles as the King of France, and all these titles have to be enumerated when a decree goes forth from their cabinet.' <sup>4</sup> Jealousies constantly developed into conflicts. The smallest princelings, afraid of being despised, rivalled those who had been more favoured by fortune

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon, with a stroke of the pen, destroyed this aggregation of small states

<sup>2</sup> Until the eighteenth century 'the smallest town and the poorest gentleman had the right to declare war on his neighbour He armed his burghers or his subjects, fell upon his enemy, pillaged his lands and sometimes these eternal wars developed into a great conflagration' (Biefeld *Progrès des Allemands*)

<sup>3</sup> Letter of the 12th October 1702

<sup>4</sup> Mauvillon *Lettres françaises et germaniques*

## GERMANY AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

Some thought only of self-aggrandizement while others feared oppression. This resulted in constant agitation, rivalries, hatreds and conspiracies in order to climb one step up the hierarchic ladder or to conquer a strip of territory by force of arms

Good relations were maintained with difficulty even between the big states. Sometimes misunderstandings arose over territory which they possessed beyond their natural frontiers (Bavaria, for example, had enclaves in Swabia, Franconia, the Upper Rhine and Alsace and even possessed the Duchies of Berg and Julich in Flanders) On other occasions religious differences fostered hostile sentiments between Catholic Courts, only too willingly influenced by Vienna, Rome or Madrid, and the Protestants who were protected by France. Finally, Southern Germany had usually very little sympathy with the North. In short, the Emperor, who sought to preserve as much power as possible, was in continual conflict with the states whose sole object was to debase him and to retain the maximum of liberty.

The political disintegration of Germany did not escape the notice of every German, and Count Manteufel, Minister in Berlin, wrote in 1738 to the philosopher Christian Wolf

'Germany today teems with princes, three-quarters of whom are completely devoid of common sense and who are a disgrace and a curse to human society. However small their country, they imagine that sovereignty was made expressly to allow them all manner of stupidities. They consider their birth—despite the fact that it is sometimes exceedingly dubious—as the criterion of all conceivable merit. In their opinion the qualities of the heart and the culture of the mind are superfluous and beneath their dignity. By their actions, one would think they were put on earth to ride roughshod over their fellow men, by the imbecility of their opinions and their actions they seem bent upon destroying everything which might make one consider man a rational being.'

Voltaire contrasted 'the French monarchy, the foremost monarchy', with 'German anarchy, the foremost anarchy', and Frederick II complained 'that the body Germanic, powerful when



one considers the number of its kings, electors and princes, is weak indeed when one examines the conflicting interests which divide it. Many politicians are surprised that a government as peculiar as that of Germany has been able to endure so long.<sup>1</sup> This plethora of small courts prevents one from observing in Germany a general intellectual and cultural development, there were only sporadic outbursts which were inevitably unstable and often abortive.

From the state of affairs such as we have just described, it follows that eighteenth-century Germany was not yet a nation. It was a race or merely a region and a region deprived of a central hearth. Goethe said to Eckermann in 1830 'Paris is France. All the main interests of that great country are concentrated in the capital. It is quite different here in Germany. . . We have no city, we have not even a region of which one could say "Here is Germany!"' If we put the question in Vienna we should get the reply "Here is Austria!" If we asked it in Berlin the reply would be "Here is Prussia!" It was only sixteen years ago, when we finally wanted to rid ourselves of the French that we discovered Germany everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

As a natural consequence, the national spirit was still unformed in Germany while everywhere else in Europe it was crystallized in the sovereign. Louis XIV declared '*L'état, c'est moi*', Frederick II was content to say 'I am the first servant of my state', and Joseph II, 'I am the chief administrator of the country'. A few German kinglets unsuccessfully attempted to ape the great King of whom they remained a mere caricature. As an example we shall quote the Duke of Württemberg, Karl-Eugen, who proclaimed 'What does the word fatherland mean? I am the fatherland'. What, in fact, could the word fatherland signify to this agglomeration of small states, principalities and free Imperial towns with no common policy? For all thinkers in Germany, humanity was the real fatherland, and in 1798 Kant noted 'the absolute lack of national pride' among the Germans. Goethe, addressing his contemporaries, wrote 'You hope in vain to become a nation. Try first, if you can, to become free men!'

Germany at the end of the seventeenth century—the happy

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de mon temps*

<sup>2</sup> Conversation of the 14th March 1830.

land of cosmopolitanism—was therefore open to foreign influences. The Thirty Years War had completely obliterated all culture.

'The country,' wrote Frederick II, 'resembled a barren land where letters and art would have sought in vain the nourishing sap necessary to their subsistence. To fertilise the untilled fields, foreign plants had to be transported'<sup>1</sup> Since Germany, ruined by the horrors of war, was incapable of producing anything original in art or literature it was quite natural that Italian and French influences, welcomed with open arms, should find a soil propitious to their development.

In the south, Italian influence was predominant at the outset. The north, on the contrary, succumbed to the ascendancy of France. The lands on the banks of the Rhine have always been particularly susceptible to western civilization. In the Rhineland, it was said, 'the perfume of lilies was too easily recognised'. These provinces, in fact, by their geographical position seemed predestined to serve as intermediaries between the Latin world and Germany.<sup>2</sup> The princes of the Rhine valley called themselves 'the Germans of France'. Contingents of their armies were sometimes incorporated in the French army and the nobles were happy and proud to learn the profession of soldiering under great masters like Turenne or Luxembourg.

The Rhinelanders turned their eyes towards Western civilization, which seemed brilliant and desirable in comparison with what was offered them by a Germany depopulated, exhausted, plunged in poverty and political anarchy. In fact, at Trier, Mainz and Cologne, Louis XIV had more power than the Emperor himself. It should also be remembered that the Rhineland remained fundamentally Catholic and was thus more easily subjected to French influence. Taken all in all, Victor Hugo was not wrong to say, 'The Rhine is far more French than the Germans think'. He would doubtless have been even more positive had he made closer

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de mon temps*

<sup>2</sup> Knebel, who accompanied the young prince of Saxe-Weimar to Paris, passed through Strasbourg, which he did not find sufficiently German for his taste. 'I do not enjoy myself here,' he wrote 'Strasbourg is a half way house and apes French customs'. When he reached the goal of his journey he risked this paradox: 'I find Paris less French than Strasbourg'.

acquaintance—as we shall do in this book—with the little Rhenish courts Frederick II readily admitted that France should have the Rhine as a frontier; ‘In the west,’ he declared (perhaps merely to court French favour), ‘France has no boundaries except her moderation and her justice. Alsace and Lorraine, dismembered from the Empire, have extended French domination as far as the Rhine. Let us hope that the Rhine continues to be the frontier of their monarchy’<sup>1</sup> And in practice he never bothered about the left bank of the great river. The ‘German Rhine’ was invented to oppose Napoleonic domination when his power was seen to be tottering.

Another cause of the gallicizing of Germany was the influx of 400,000 Protestant refugees expelled from France by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685).<sup>2</sup> These exiles brought with them the good renown of their country, French methods of industry, a taste for art and a knowledge of French literature. After their exodus Berlin became a semi-French town and when Frederick II wanted to reorganize the Prussian Academy of Science, founded by Leibniz on the French model, he entrusted the presidency to a Frenchman, Maupertuis. Among other centres, Erlangen, in Bavaria, was entirely created by French refugees. While nursing a violent resentment against the authorities which had forced them to emigrate, they remained French at heart and preferred their native customs to those of their country of adoption.

After the Peace of Nijmegen (1679) the old German customs began to decline—on the surface at least. French influence, after reigning in the north, gained the south of Germany and reached its apogee, it seemed to have no boundaries. It might be thought

<sup>1</sup> Frederick II. *Considérations sur l'état présent du corps politique de L'Europe* (The king even pretended to see no inconvenience in the annexation by France of the Duchy of Luxembourg, the small electorate of Trier, the Duchies of Liège and Flanders, etc.)

<sup>2</sup> Frederick II. *Considérations sur l'état présent du corps politique de L'Europe* ‘There are two stains on this fine reign (that of Louis XIV) to have authorised the burning of the Palatinate and to have revoked the Edict of Nantes.’ The old French term ‘Huguenot’ comes from the German word ‘Eidgenossen’ (confederates).

that the wars of Louis XIV would have aroused an antipathy or a resentment against a victorious enemy. Quite the contrary happened. The prestige of France, which personified Western civilization, was supreme. The entire eighteenth century, submitting to the charm of French wit, knelt in adoration before it, and this wit, easily penetrating into society beyond the Rhine, awakened there an artistic and literary movement. It is difficult indeed to say what Wieland would have been without Voltaire, Lessing without Diderot, Herder without Rousseau. Frederick II wrote: 'French taste ruled our cooking, our furniture, our clothes and all those trifles on which fashion exercises her tyranny. This passion, carried to excess, degenerated into a mania. Women, who are so often prone to exaggeration, pushed it to extravagance.'<sup>1</sup>

The whole of Germany was reflected in the French mirror. French intervention modified it at least superficially. The period between 1650 and 1750, which by a kind of time-lag corresponds to what is called the seventeenth century, was for the Germans one of the emptiest, while in France it was one of the most brilliant.<sup>2</sup> 'It was a period unique in our history,' says Louis Reynaud. 'Everywhere the bright genius of France brought order, tracing the straight, majestic avenues of her sovereign logic through the anomalies and contradictions bequeathed by the past.'

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la Maison de Brandebourg*. On the subject of Gallomania the palm could, no doubt, be given to the mother of the poet Canitz who, 'having exhausted France for new fashions, to out rival the other ladies in Berlin, commissioned a merchant to bring her from Paris a young, handsome, vigorous, polished, witty and noble husband on the theory that this merchandise could be found there as easily as pompons in a shop window. The merchant, quite new to this particular trade, carried out his commission as best he could: his agents finally found a candidate. He was a man of fifty, a little feeble-minded and a chronic invalid. He duly arrived. Madame de Canitz saw him, lost her head and married him. It was lucky for the Prussians that the lady got the worst of the bargain, otherwise her example would undoubtedly have been followed' (Frederick II, *op cit*).

<sup>2</sup> This is the opinion of one of the best German art critics (Dehio, author of *Die Geschichte der deutschen Kunst*) who gives as a reason for this poverty the decadence into which his country was plunged after the Thirty Years War. In addition to this the struggle between the two religions must be taken into account: the Protestant hostile to all art except music, the Catholic, an inspirer of civil and religious building.

## GERMANY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Although many great minds such as Leibniz approved and even encouraged<sup>1</sup> this invasion, one hears here and there the voice of protest. The Duchess of Orléans, the Princess Palatine, regretting the simple and idyllic Germany of her youth, is indignant that 'today the Germans find perfection in everything which comes from France'.<sup>2</sup> The same hostility is voiced by the German, Christian Thomas, the seventeenth-century philosopher and critic, who writes in his *Dissertation on the Imitation of the French*. 'If our ancestors returned to this world, they would no longer recognise us. We have become degenerates and bastards. Today everything here must be French. French clothes, dishes, language, French customs and French vices'.<sup>3</sup>

An anonymous writer of 1689 expresses the same discontent on the part of old Teutons at the French invasion. 'French language, French clothes, French food, French furniture, French dances, French music, the French pox. . . perhaps there is also a French death! Hardly have the children emerged from their mothers' wombs than people think of giving them a French teacher. . . To please the girls, even if one is ugly and deformed, one must wear a French habit'.

But these complaints were of no avail. The French tide swept all before it and for more than a century we are faced with a puerile, grimacing parody, an extravagant caricature of the luxury and elegance of the *Roi Soleil*. In imitation of Versailles, the German princes—and the less important they were, the greater their ostentation—wished to enjoy fêtes and mistresses, to dance in the ballets, to perform in pastorals and to follow in the wake of Louis XIV's brilliant monarchy. Despite remonstrances from Vienna, they exhausted themselves in mad debauch, in complicated intrigues, in fêtes which in a single night devoured the revenue of an entire year. A choice is discernible in this imitation.

<sup>1</sup> Leibniz wrote 'If French grace could join with German gravity, it would give a little amiability to the German nation'.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to her sister Luise, dated 26th October 1720.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, however, cannot refrain from recommending German students to imitate their French colleagues and to acquire '*leur beauté d'esprit et leur galanterie*'. (In French in his text.)

Some took as their model the French King's military pomp,<sup>1</sup> others his mania for building and for designing gardens where antiquity and poetic mythology are revealed at each step, nearly all of them aped his Spanish gallantry. Taken all in all, these Lilliputian sovereigns remind us far less of Louis XIV, the great protagonist of royalty, than of comic-opera figures

Germany, in her fascination, accepted French vices as well as virtues, mistaking the former for indispensable elegance. Thus, as was to be feared, they produced a bad imitation, and the French virus was not without its dangers. The same strange effects had been noticed at the Court of France when between 1520 and 1600 the parody of Italian customs imported by Louis XII and François I gave birth to that mixture of uncouthness and passion, of licence and barbarity, of effeminate grace and violence so characteristic of the age of the Valois. The German princes considered it the height of good breeding, in the words of Rûhs, to transform their court into 'a French colony'.<sup>2</sup> Frederick II and Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony, almost succeeded.

Germany thus became a happy hunting ground for unemployed Frenchmen, who were astounded at the consideration with which they were received. There was an incredible migration of French people into Germany: ministers, unemployed statesmen, officials and adventurers crossed the Rhine in their thousands with the object of making a fortune. Other things being equal, a French servant received better wages than his German counterpart. Any French barber masqueraded under the title of Marquis.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Every petty German princeling insists upon tall men for his guards. This will change the stature of men in Germany.' (Montesquieu *Foyages*)

<sup>2</sup> In about 1775 Karl Wilhelm-Ferdinand reigning in Brunswick admitted only French people to his court and adopted French customs, to such an extent that a visitor, seeing the Prince presiding at a table around which the guests were exclusively French, cried by way of a compliment 'It's very strange, your Grace, but you are the only foreigner here.'

<sup>3</sup> We know that in Germany the title of Marquis seemed to denote the epitome of perfection. 'Things came to such a pitch that the Germans gave this title irrespectively to every Frenchman, and the German lord would rarely say "I have a good French cook," but "I have a French Marquis in my kitchen, I will send you one of my Marquises," meaning "I will send you one of my French lackeys"' (*Lettres françaises et germaniques*)

In the household budget of Duke Georg-Wilhelm of Zell, the French groom figures at an annual wage of 421 thalers, whereas his German colleague had to be content with 228. The German doctor, as regards salary, ranked with the French coachman Frederick II, when asked to engage as his librarian the illustrious Winckelmann, at a salary of 2,000 thalers, replied 'A thousand thalers is enough for a German.' Upon this he sent for an obscure French Benedictine and gave him the sum which he had refused to his own countryman.

The society of a small German town with a princely residence must have been a strange sight, where the nobility by flattery and the bourgeoisie by infection strained their ingenuity to follow the example set by the court in adopting ideas and customs diametrically opposed to the German temperament.<sup>1</sup> The more intelligent were fully aware of the incongruity and Frederick II admitted to his sister Sophia Wilhelmina, 'We are emerging from barbarism and are still in our cradles. But the French have already gone a long way and are a century in advance of us in every kind of success.'<sup>2</sup> And he wrote to Voltaire 'You are right to say that our good Germans are still at the dawn of their knowledge. In the fine arts Germany is still at the period of François I. We love them, we cultivate them, foreigners transplant them here, but the soil is not yet propitious enough to produce them itself.'

<sup>1</sup> Christian Thomas, 'one of the finest minds of the century' according to Bielfeld, 'taught good sense and a light touch to pedants who dabbled in dog Latin. He wanted authors to be able to banter in the French manner, but his own jests and his parodies of antiquity, which were considered as brilliant examples of wit, are models of ponderousness.'

<sup>2</sup> Letter of the 16th November 1746

# The Influence of France in Germany



The France of Louis XIV doubtless impressed Germany by her political and military successes, but she had a powerful additional ally in the French language. When Voltaire arrived in Berlin he wrote to Mme Denis 'The language least spoken at Court is German I have still not heard a word of it. Our language and our letters have made more conquests than Charlemagne'<sup>1</sup> After being adopted as the diplomatic language,<sup>2</sup> this marvellously lucid language became the instrument of French civilization and reigned supreme throughout Germany. A pamphleteer at the end of the seventeenth century fulminated against these linguistic encroachments 'Today in our country everything has to be French—the language, the clothes, the dishes, the music and even the maladies. Most of the German courts are organized on French lines and anyone wishing to succeed in life must know French and above all to have been to Paris.'

At the outset French penetrated the entourage of the princes. It was, to some extent, a complement of ceremonial dress, as indispensable as the sword and buckles. No one dared to introduce a gentleman to the court unless he spoke French. Frederick II nearly always wrote in French and became, moreover, the best German writer expressing himself in that language. This versatile prince, more Prussian than German, loved French wit while despising France and evinced a genuine contempt for his mother

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the 24th August 1750

<sup>2</sup> It was not until the beginning of the seventeenth century that all the ambassadors spoke French. Prior to this they had recourse to interpreters when discussing affairs of international policy



tongue which he considered a barbarous jargon 'created for ad-dressing animals' <sup>1</sup> On his orders, professors and pupils had to speak exclusively in French. He dispatched to the Königl.che Bibliothek all the German books which were sent to him and kept nothing but French books in his own private library. He insisted that at the Berlin Academy French should be the sole language and that the faculty should set as the theme for its prize-giving essay 'A Discourse on the Universality of the French Language' <sup>2</sup> He finally complained to Voltaire of the obstacles which faced the German language on its road to perfection. 'There is,' he wrote, 'one difficulty which will always prevent us from having good books in our language. It is because no one has ever prescribed the use of words. And since Germany is split into a host of small kingdoms a method will never be found to make them submit to the decisions of an Academy. Our scholars, therefore, have no choice but to write in foreign languages, and since it is very difficult to acquire a basic knowledge of them it is greatly to be feared that our literature will never make any great progress' <sup>3</sup>

Voltaire, on his arrival at Potsdam in 1750, found French so widespread that he could not believe his ears. 'I find myself in France here,' he writes, 'our language alone is spoken. German is only for soldiers and horses. As a good patriot, I am rather flattered

<sup>1</sup> Frederick was no doubt alluding to the witticism of Charles V. 'If I wished to speak to God I should do so in Spanish, to my mistress in Italian, to my friend in French, to my horses in German.' He wrote an essay in which German literature is treated in such unflattering terms compared with French literature that in 1781 Goethe was encouraged to defend his compatriots in quite resolute terms.

<sup>2</sup> Rivarol won the prize by writing an essay containing the famous statement 'anything which is not clear is not French.'

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Voltaire dated 26th July 1737. The King ended his *Étude sur la littérature allemande* which appeared in 1780 on a more optimistic note. 'We shall have our classic writers,' he wrote, 'and everyone will enjoy reading them to their advantage. Our neighbours will learn German, the courts will find more pleasure in speaking it and it may happen that our language, refined, perfected and supported by our good writers, will spread from one end of Europe to the other. The heyday of our literature has not yet arrived but it is approaching. I tell you that it will arrive and that I shall not see it for my age leaves me no hope in this respect. I am like Moses, I can see the promised land from afar, but I shall never set foot in it.'

to see this little homage paid to my country, three hundred leagues from Paris.<sup>1</sup> He made no effort to familiarize himself with the German tongue. 'You must not think,' he wrote to d'Argental, 'that I am seriously learning the Teuton language. I prudently confine myself to knowing enough to speak to my servants and my horses.'<sup>2</sup>

The contagion spread through all the German courts. At Mannheim the Elector Karl-Theodor conducted a correspondence with Voltaire in the purest French. Sophia Wilhelmina, the Margravine of Bayreuth, wrote with delight to her brother, Frederick II. 'The language, wit, and fashion of France, have found their chosen place at our Court.' Sophia Dorothea of Hanover, who, according to von Pöllnitz, spoke French 'better than a royal princess of France' although her husband, Friedrich-Wilhelm the King of Prussia, constantly displayed gallophobic<sup>3</sup> sentiments, insisted that her son, the future Frederick II, should be brought up by a Frenchman, Duhan de Jandun, and that her daughter, Sophia Wilhelmina, receive a careful education from a French governess, Mme de Roucoulles. During a conversation with Princess Sophia Charlotte, daughter-in-law of Friedrich-Wilhelm the Elector of Prussia, a Frenchman asked her naively if she also knew German. Princess Caroline of Hesse-Darmstadt used French exclusively to correspond with her husband and even to write to people whom she knew were completely unacquainted with this language. Another princess only learned her mother tongue when she married a Prince of Lichtenstein. Another, when addressing her maid, said 'Give me *Catalina* to read in the French translation. Today I want to feel sad and in future I wish to weep only in French.' Karl-Eugen, Duke of Wurtemberg, performing his morning toilet, made his secretary, Ritter von Lang, write German replies to letters written in French. On being shown the German and French texts, he protested immediately. 'Ah, no, *Grand Dieu*, what's all this? You should have put quite the opposite. How

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Marquis de Thibouville, 24th October 1750

<sup>2</sup> Letter of the 28th November 1750

<sup>3</sup> One day a petition was sent to King Friedrich-Wilhelm asking him to halt the French invasion of Prussia. the petition was written in French!

badly that is drafted. What a misfortune it is that I have a secretary who knows German so badly <sup>1</sup>

Princely circles, therefore, set the tone for the whole of society.

If German was not entirely excluded and was spoken behind the scenes, remaining the family language, French ruled supreme in good society 'The native tongue of the country,' wrote the English traveller John Moore, in 1774, 'is considered to be a vulgar provincial dialect while French is cultivated as the idiom suited to people of fashion' The need to know French to be accepted in society 'is carried to such a point that in a town where there is no court a German of distinction referring to someone of lower rank will say, "Yes, but you see, he doesn't speak French" <sup>2</sup>

Thus, at an early age, the children were taught French and French teachers saw to it that they lost all trace of a Teuton accent 'The children of the leading families in the land are taught French before they learn their mother tongue and trouble is taken to see that they remain ignorant of the latter, lest it harm their French pronunciation I have met people whose main object was to be incapable of expressing themselves in their own language and who pretended to be more ignorant of German than they really were.' <sup>3</sup>

French, substituted for German, had become the customary language for all men of culture. Lessing, in order to show his play *Miss Sarah Sampson* in Brunswick, had to have it translated into French He had the same trouble when he tried to produce one of his patriotic dramas, *Minna* Moreover, the translation of a play into French was considered the best possible form of publicity for the work

It must not be concluded from my preceding remarks that French was spoken everywhere in all its purity. Good form was satisfied with less, it was quite sufficient to interlard the conversation with a few French words <sup>4</sup> A Westphalian nobleman invited

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of Ritter von Lang

<sup>2</sup> Anon. *Journey to the Banks of the Rhine*, 1818

<sup>3</sup> John Moore *Journey to Germany*, 1774 'The words "governess" and "French"', says Ruhs, 'have become synonymous'

<sup>4</sup> The Raugravine Luise wrote to her half-sister, the Duchess of Orleans, that she was disgusted to use French words in her letters and

several of his friends to a meal and in the affected language of the day, stuffed with German and French words, ordered the menu from his cook in the following terms 'Ecoute, cuisinier, von meinen Kamaraden hab'ich zwei oder drei zum *déjeuner* geladen. Mach mir ein gut *Potage* und all *Appartenance*, wie man es à la *cour* zu dressieren pflegt *en France*' When the cook was reproached for his disgusting stews, he retorted that he imagined he was intended to treat his dishes as his master had treated the German Language. Lauremberg, a satirist of the middle of the seventeenth century who recounts the anecdote, adds 'The French have cut the nose off the German language and stuck on another which does not conform to the German ears' Moscheroch, the author of a pamphlet entitled *À la Mode*, gives his fellow citizens a sound drubbing 'How stupid you are! Have you ever met an animal which changes its language to please another? Have you ever heard a cat bark to please a dog or a dog mew to delight a cat? And yet the temperaments of the German and the French are like cat and dog'

The powerful German race had no instinct for gracefulness. It had to find it abroad. Thus, from the end of the seventeenth century a European journey for every well-bred young German who would be called upon to hold an important position was an essential feature of a good education. This journey, known as the 'Knights' Tour', usually consisted of a visit to England, Holland, Spain and Italy,<sup>1</sup> but particularly France.

They flocked to Paris which had become 'the new Athens' or *le café de l'Europe*, to 'learn their manners', as one said in those days, to study wit, the customs and breeding of good society,

her correspondent encouraged her in this aversion. 'Besides, it is a very stupid habit people have adopted here as though German did not suffice to express all our ideas. I fear that in the long run German will become corrupted to the point of no longer being a language at all.'

<sup>1</sup> Venice had become a centre of attraction for the whole of Europe. Most of the German princes wanted to know at first hand that unique enchantment, the Venetian Carnival, which Schiller has described from hearsay in his uncompleted novel *Der Geisterseher*.

French politeness and, above all, the art of conversation; to try, in short, to become frenchified and lose the Germanic boorishness which was called in Paris '*les airs allemands*'<sup>1</sup> '*La jolie nature*,' cries M. de Caraccioli, the Neapolitan Ambassador at Versailles, when speaking of French charm. 'These French *brillamment* in all they say, they add a spice to everything they do. It is their women who *veloutent* the characters and inspire that amenity so necessary in everyday life.' In 1753 Bielfeld wrote a comedy, *A Picture of the Court*, in which the head of the family makes the following remarks to his son: 'I intend to send you to Paris. You will assume that little French air the men find so impressive and which has such a success with women. A French tailor will do you far more good than a Greek philosopher. French women, above all, possess an amazing talent for forming youth. If you should find one whose charms seduce you enough for you to want to settle down with her, I shall be indulgent.'

Versailles, in particular, was a hearth whose brilliant light was to dazzle the young German princes for many years to come. A sort of obsession urged them 'to imitate within their means (and sometimes far beyond them) this famous spot with its park laid out by Le Nôtre and the annexes of the Trianon and Marly, perfect types of royal residence.'<sup>2</sup> 'Versailles and its park,' wrote Reynaud, 'sublime and serene dwelling of the European king of kings where with incredible audacity stone, soil and water had been disciplined to conform to the conventions of society life, was for contemporaries the supreme revelation of the monarchy of Louis XIV, its magnificence and its ordered, self-disciplined strength.' Frederick II recognized that Europe, dazzled by the grandeur which Louis XIV impressed on all his actions, the manners which reigned at his court and the great men who made his reign illustrious, wanted to imitate this France which it admired. The whole of Germany made a pilgrimage there, and any gentle-

<sup>1</sup> Saint-Simon refers to the Germans as 'gross, ignorant creatures, very easy to dupe, whom one cannot help mocking'. In Paris, Germany was considered so barbarous that a certain M. de Mirampole advised parents to send their sons to Germany 'to retard the age of puberty by the rigours of the climate'.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Réau, *op. cit.*

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man who had not acquired a social veneer at the Court of Versailles was treated as a cretin or an unwashed bear-cub<sup>1</sup>

At the outset, a stay in France proved a boon to the princes. They came in contact with a foreign culture, since the culture of their own country was a mere euphemism. But at the start of the Regency, immorality replaced the suavity that had reigned at the court of the great king. The princes, falling victim to the contagious disease of evil habits<sup>2</sup> no longer acquired anything in Paris except a taste for excessive luxury and a contempt for their own nation. 'To some extent,' said Leibniz, 'we have set France up as a paragon of all virtues and our young folk—particularly our young princes—have in consequence misunderstood their own country while, on the other hand, admiring everything which comes from France. Not only have they discredited their own country in the eyes of foreigners, but they themselves have helped to discredit it. Their inexperience has induced in them a distaste for the German language and customs which remains even when they reach the age of reason.' The general opinion is more or less unanimous that the demoralizing effect of the example set by the Regency was deplorable for Germany.

One must not imagine that birth alone could immediately introduce these princely travellers into the intimacy of the Court of France. Only in cases where family ties linked them to the royal family had they, in principle, the right to the honours of the palace and then they gave precedence to the French dukes. The Baronesse d'Oberkirch was scandalized to see the official protocol applied to a member of the Wurttemberg family which held such a high place in her esteem and affection. 'Is it not strange to see Duke Ludwig-Fugen of Wurttemberg, brother of a reigning Duke and his heir presumptive, having no rank at the Court of France? Thus the princes of the House of Bourbon, even the younger

<sup>1</sup> *Memoires pour servir à l'histoire de Brandebourg*. It must be noted that the Great Elector of Prussia, grandfather of Frederick II, forbade the nobility to go to Paris.

<sup>2</sup> A Prince of Wurttemberg, Friedrich-Karl, d. 1698, went to Paris and met a dancing girl from the Opera, la Deschamps, who 'gave him a present of which he died; this prince paid very dearly for his wild debauches' (Letter of 26th November 1719.)

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members, had precedence abroad over reigning princes of the second class. They rank as equals of all the kings and give their hand to no one in their own house. Louis XIV wanted it thus and his will, which has become custom, is still respected.'

It was in fact impossible to evade established usage.

'The pride of the princes of Germany, this last temple of etiquette, was forced to accept this social level when they came to France. All the German princes, sovereigns in their own country, were treated in Paris by French gentlemen as their equals.<sup>1</sup> There was no difference, for example, between Prince Max of Zweibrücken, today King of Bavaria, and the French gentlemen who served or lived in his society, for this prince had entered the service of France. The Electors and a few sovereigns, even of the third class, such as the Duke of Zweibrücken, unwilling to recognize this equality but wishing to enjoy the pleasures afforded by a visit to Paris, overcame all these difficulties by travelling incognito. It was for this reason that the Duke of Zweibrücken used as his alias the Count of Sponheim. The Electors had the highest pretensions. They believed that they should enjoy royal honours everywhere, they were unwilling to give precedence even to princes of the blood royal. Thus they were very rarely seen in France and their presence became the object of bitter wrangling at Court.'<sup>2</sup>

Although the German princes had access to the king's entourage only through half-open doors, they were given a particularly warm reception in Parisian society. The Duchess of Orléans remained German at heart, despite her affectionate admiration for Louis XIV whom, incidentally, she never forgave the

<sup>1</sup> 'There are many small princes in the Empire who would refuse to give precedence to French princes of the blood. It is not because they think themselves wealthier or better born, but because they are sovereigns' (*Lettres françaises et germaniques*)

<sup>2</sup> Comte de Segur *Mémoires ou Souvenirs et Anecdotes*. The Margrave of Ansbach, the Duke of Hanover, the Prince of Württemberg, the Duke of Holstein and others, who were present in 1681 at Versailles at the first night of the ballet *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, were seated with the ambassadors and foreign ministers (*Mission à la cour de France*, by Ezekiel von Spanheim, quoted in Joet *Mélanges*)

burning of the Palatinate. Despite half a century spent in Paris, in the school of good taste and fine manners, she never managed to acquire the urbanity and French tact which is so incompatible with the German character. Thus, far from taking umbrage at their customs, which remained coarse, she attracted her compatriots to her salon, showing herself eager for news of the country which they alone could bring her. She announced to the Raugravine Luise, as though it were a success 'Yesterday I had in my bedroom six German princes, four counts and several gentlemen, twenty-one Germans in all. You can imagine that we spoke far more German than French'<sup>1</sup> She also confided to her half-sister in 1707. 'I am like those old coachmen who still enjoy hearing the crack of the whip when they can no longer drive.'

In general, the princes were delighted with their stay in France. Henry of Prussia, Frederick II's brother, declared on his return home. 'I have spent half my life wanting to see Paris and I shall spend the other half regretting it' The young tourists were surprised at the gaiety reigning in the French capital which—at least their parents hoped—would make them shed their surliness. A Swabian countess wrote 'My son has just returned from Paris where he has spent six months. I congratulate myself because I know now that in future he will laugh.'

Contrary to expectations the princes on their return to their gloomy country began to regret the life they had seen abroad and for which they were now homesick. They did not bring back from their journey the urbane qualities of France alone, but all the French vices. They suffered from an inferiority complex, and from fear of being considered barbarians they exaggerated out of all proportion the evil as well as the good. The Princess Palatine—Iselotte to her intimates—admits as much herself. 'We have always had the misfortune that Germany not only imitates France but always does double what is done here' She was delighted, it is true, to attribute to France particularly German defects which the princes took back home. 'They write to me that our good Germans are cruelly spoiled and that

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the 20th March 1699



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they have repudiated the old qualities of their ancestors by adopting the vices of foreign nations. This sincerely distresses me. The Germans are less suited than any other race to be false, evil and debauched, because it is not really in their nature. In the old days the Germans were far more virtuous but in France they have learned all manner of disorders, especially unnatural vice, which is dreadful in Paris.<sup>1</sup>

After a few months of gay and carefree life, for which they acquired a taste, the princes returned home and tried to ape the weaknesses as well as the magnificence of the great king. In this way they introduced at home a frozen copy of Versailles, to which they summoned Frenchmen of all types—and not always the best of them. They needed new castles in place of their outmoded fortresses, mistresses in place of their good housewives. As a result of visiting the wings of theatres and depraved society too frequently, they often brought home the beginning of an improvised family. They needed operas and ballets in the mode of Quinault and Lully, they demanded real actors instead of buffoons. And, finally, they believed they had acquired fine manners, the elegance of Versailles and its gallantry inasmuch as they ill-treated women, drank themselves into a stupor from morning till night and became, in short, tyrants. The courtiers had a fine time developing a taste for debauchery in their masters and in taking from their shoulders the cares and troubles of policy. By and large, the French virus did little to advance them along the path of civilization.

The brilliance of Louis XIV's reign had therefore many imitators beyond the Rhine. The upper classes adopted the French mode of life and the men of letters were too familiar with French masterpieces not to be inspired by them, even subconsciously. Then came the misfortunes of the closing years of the great reign. They were accompanied by a certain disenchantment and gradually the mirage of the fine days vanished. Nevertheless the Court of France, although partially losing its characteristic strength and grandeur, preserved its prestige for elegance, the good taste of France long survived the reign which had given it birth. 'Letters,

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the 24th July 1721

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less serious and less pure in style, still furnished sufficiently beautiful models to justify this impetus <sup>1</sup>

From the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, German writers began to deplore the peaceful French invasion and tried to raise barriers against it. This was a critical period for the influence of French culture in Germany. The Seven Years War cost the France of Louis XV some of the absolute empire she had inherited from the preceding reign. A defeat such as Rossbach was enough to bring about a change of heart. Once Prussia asserted herself by her victories in the field, the national spirit on the other side of the Rhine woke from a sleep of several centuries. Germany, aggrandized in the general esteem by everything France had lost, became aware of her worth and began to consider her neighbour from a new angle: 'The Germans,' writes Collin, 'cannot help looking upon France as a futile, frivolous, vain, deflated nation, made for self-complacency and unworthy of being imitated. I met several young Germans who laughed uproariously at the French mania for fashion, without realizing that they followed this fashion step by step.'<sup>2</sup>

Admittedly France retained her champions Wieland, the most Gallic of German authors, is full of Voltaire. Gottsched and his school still demanded French classics. Goethe, while deploring that his country had been taken in tow by its neighbour, remained fundamentally francophile and wrote French of great purity. On the other hand, Klopstock and Herder were outspoken opponents of French influence, against which they delivered the most grievous blows. The former wrote an epigram against Frederick II

*Tu t'es rabaisé à singer les voix étrangères,  
Et tu n'as recueilli que le mépris,  
Même après qu' Arouet a purifié ta langue (French)  
On t'a reproché que ta chanson reste tudesque!*

Lessing, it is true, championed the new ideas but took it upon himself to free German dramatic art from the yoke of the French theatre, and advocated the production of real national master-

<sup>1</sup> L. Croulé *Lessing et le goût français en Allemagne*, 1863

<sup>2</sup> *Lettres sur les Allemands*, 1790

pieces as the sole means of defeating the reigning taste. German literature of the eighteenth century has no spontaneity. Issuing from university chairs and libraries, it is merely a product of patient study and erudite meditation. The youngest of the Muses, the tenth sister, Criticism, bent over the infant's cradle. She was the inspiring Muse which the methodical spirit of the Germans would best obey. Lessing in this transition period was the man who prepared Germany for the coming of original genius, he irrevocably destroyed the belief held in his country as to the perfection of French writers.<sup>1</sup> Two of his friends, Nicolai and Mendelssohn, tried to make Berlin the citadel of the anti-French spirit.

The reaction set in especially after 1760, at the moment when Frederick II aroused the enthusiasm of the whole of Germany.<sup>2</sup> The time was approaching when German literature, formed in the French school, modifying French ideas according to its own genius, would bring new conceptions and a new art to civilization. Basically, however, these two neighbouring peoples were still strangers to each other. The French persisted in considering the Germans as barbarians and the Germans in seeing France as a nation of *petits maîtres* and intriguers.<sup>3</sup> From the last quarter of the century the English current invaded Germany, its philosophy, literature and fashion were detrimental to French influence. Shakespeare was discovered and his plays were performed with enthusiasm on every German stage.

<sup>1</sup> L. Crouslé, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Even in Munich at the moment when Bavaria was at war with Prussia, one could see in each household a portrait of the King of Prussia prominently displayed.

<sup>3</sup> Frederick II writes in his *Anti-Machiavel*. 'Frivolity and inconstancy form the character of this amiable nation [France]. The French are restless libertines and very inclined to be bored with everything. Their love of change is apparent even in the most serious matters.'

## The Princes and Absolute Power



Among the small German courts one naturally meets a number of figures whom foreign influence raised to a high degree of culture. Towards the middle of the century the princely societies of Rheinsberg, Sans-Souci, Weimar, Bayreuth and Karlsruhe, among others, are examples of an advanced civilization. The archbishops of Cologne, members of the Schonborn family, were lovers of art and great patrons. The Electors of Saxony and the Palatinate, and the Princes of Baden, formed collections of pictures and libraries which became famous, while other small sovereigns of lesser means were content with museums of natural history or print rooms.<sup>1</sup>

But these are only isolated cases, and it must be admitted that the majority of the German courts—the smaller ones being less civilized than the larger—remind one of furniture whose precious veneer masks a foundation of plain wood. What showed through was coarseness and clumsiness. The princes, in their unhealthy wish to imitate in all its details the impressive pomp of Versailles at their own courts, managed only to inspire, in the guise of propriety, a cold and brutal gallantry. They openly introduced libertinism without heed for scandal and almost without suspecting it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The mania for collecting which obsessed most of the small German princes was, in some cases pushed to extravagance. A certain Duke of Wurttemberg amassed 4 000 different editions of the Bible, while the Duke of Brunswick owned every type of harpsichord and spinet, certain of which were reserved for the use of his favourite cats.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Mecklenburg who in 1717 resided at Magdeburg found it quite natural to wear horns openly, and saw nothing against his wife becoming the mistress of Peter the Great under his very eyes.

Their wives as a general rule remained somewhat in the background. Naturally there were exceptions—superior women, such as Sophia Dorothea of Hanover, Sophia Charlotte, the first Queen of Prussia,<sup>1</sup> Sophia Wilhelmina of Bayreuth and Anna Amalia of Weimar. On the other hand, others were not afraid of displaying an incredible profligacy—women such as the Princess of Nassau-Siegen, of whom the Duchess of Orléans speaks, the Margravine of Bayreuth-Kulmbach, who introduced lovers into her daughter's bed, or that Duchess of Württemberg whom the shocked Sophia Wilhelmina called the 'Lais of her age'. Others, and this applies to the majority, remained good burghers, faithful to the strict morality of olden times. They lived on the fringes of the court. Determined to ignore the irregular life of their husbands, they retired in favour of an all-powerful mistress or a morganatic wife.<sup>2</sup>

Taken as a whole, the German courts remained droll caricatures of Versailles, and had Louis XIV been shown the Margrave Wilhelm of Baden with his ridiculous harem, Augustus of Saxony with his bestial orgies or Karl of Zweibrücken in one of his epileptic fits, he would have refused to countenance his imitators and would have cried, as he did before the canvases of Teniers 'Remove these apes'. A Molière was lacking to depict these brutish barbarians, these noble ruffians playing the refined marquis, these princesses who did their utmost to copy the manners of the Hôtel de Rambouillet.

The small German princes had two main preoccupations in life, to satisfy their vanity and to affirm their absolute power. The majority of these epicureans gave no thought to government but only to enjoying the pleasures of life. It was a matter of indifference to them that their country was small and poor, at all costs,

<sup>1</sup> The Queen, whose mind was extremely subtle, said to Leibniz in a conversation at Charlottenburg 'No, Leibniz, you have not fully explained'. 'Madame,' replied the philosopher, 'how can I satisfy you? You want to know the wherefore of the why.'

<sup>2</sup> In Germany a prince could contract one or several 'left-handed marriages' provided he obtained the consent of his legitimate wife. The word 'morganatic' is probably of German origin. It may derive from *Morgengabe*, a gift promised next morning after a night of pleasure.

and by noisy ostentation, they had to outshine the neighbouring court. 'Love of glory', wrote a contemporary, Risbeck, 'is the most powerful driving force of the princes, who try to make up for real grandeur by shining in little things, an affectation which would merely merit ridicule had it not resulted in the oppression of their subjects.'<sup>1</sup> Frederick II wrote 'There is no prince down to the younger member with an apanage who does not imagine himself to be a Louis XIV. He builds his Versailles, has his mistresses and maintains an army.' This remark is followed by a severe censure 'When the master wishes at the same time to have soldiers, huntsmen, a troupe of comedians, an opera company and mistresses, when he wishes to live sumptuously and indulge in the luxury of building; when, in fact, he wants what every would-be master in the world wants, then God have mercy on the country afflicted with such a prince.' And he concludes by comparing these courts to 'temples where the bacchanalia are celebrated'. The poet Besser, in a very successful play in verse, found a happy formula '*Der König ist vergnugt, das Land erfreut*.'<sup>2</sup> (The King is pleased, the country rejoices.)

What the German eighteenth century most admired in France was the absolute power symbolized by Louis XIV, we shall find it aped in miniature everywhere. Moreover the exercise of this absolute power was not difficult to impose upon a country which, like Germany, had always worshipped force, a country where 'the people are always ready to preserve a high idea of their prince's dignity'.<sup>3</sup> No one protested when Friedrich-Wilhelm, King of

<sup>1</sup> Baron Caspar von Risbeck (d. 1786), a Wurttemberger of very French tastes, was favourably received by the princes whom he visited in the course of several journeys, usually made on foot with a dog and a gun. In 1785 he published three volumes of *Briefe eines reisenden Franzosen über Deutschland*.

<sup>2</sup> According to J. J. Moser, the outlook of the German princes was due to the education they received. 'Most of them learned at court languages, music, dancing, horsemanship and nothing else. With this preparation they acceded to the throne, not considering their elevation as a burden whose duties they had to learn but rather with the mentality of a son who has long wished for his father's demise and suddenly finds himself in possession of a fortune which he can dispose of as he wishes. I am almost ashamed to be a German!'

<sup>3</sup> Mauvillon *Lettres françaises et germaniques*

Prussia, in a proclamation which his country still remembers, declared 'I will stabilize the *souveraineté* like a *rocher de bronze*' (the words in italics are in French in the text), nor when he gave this warning to his people 'We are King and master, and we do as we please',<sup>1</sup> nor when his son Frederick qualified what he had conceded by a threat 'Think! But obey!' From then onwards one sees the despotism, fantasy and pleasure of the prince deciding everything. The exercise of such power inevitably led to crime or to farce. 'For the Germans, sovereignty consists in the magnificent privilege of suppressing people with impunity. To kill a man when the prince feels so inclined is an act of sovereignty, in France it is looked upon as an act of barbarism.'<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Mecklenburg's teacher persuaded his pupil that 'he was sovereign of life and property, what his nobility possessed was a usurpation of his rights.'<sup>3</sup> A count of Schaumburg-Lippe, having mortally wounded a huntsman while beating for stag, sought some consolation from his confessor 'Since the life of your subjects belongs to you, you are entitled to deprive them of it,' replied the pastor.<sup>4</sup>

We shall see a Margrave of Ansbach shoot one of his huntsmen who had dared to contradict him, a count of Nassau-Siegen execute a peasant in 1707 simply to prove that he had absolute rights over the person of his subjects, a prince of Hilburghausen place within reach on a table where he worked with his ministers two pistols and a big hunting-knife which he would use should anyone object to his decrees.

On the other hand it is difficult to suppress a smile when one hears one of these petty despots, entirely devoid of humour, declare in all seriousness 'There is no greater man in my Empire than the man to whom I am speaking, and only during the time I am speaking to him,' or of that ecclesiastic of Württemberg who apologized most respectfully to his prince 'Your royal sows have deigned to eat my wretched potatoes.'<sup>5</sup>

Even time had to be domesticated. The little cabinet clock of

<sup>1</sup> Perthes *Das deutsche Staatsleben vor der Revolution* (1845)

<sup>2</sup> Mauvillon, *op cit*      <sup>3</sup> Montesquieu *Voyages*

<sup>4</sup> Biedermann *Deutschland im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*

<sup>5</sup> Friedel *Kulturgeschichte der Neuzeit* (Munich, 1928)

HIS Highness gave the hour to the castle clock and since this was set at the prince's pleasure it was no longer the sun but HIS Highness who decided the exact time throughout the extent of his little state. One sees the advantage the master could draw from this act of authority when he wished to cut short an importunate audience. The town clocks were quite surprised at no longer marking the same hour as the palace bells; half the dinners in the capital were eaten cold, appointments were missed and only the prince and his valets knew the reason for this upset.<sup>1</sup>

'The tiny German principalities, for two centuries, had diminutive tyrants who surpassed in vice and sometimes in cruelty the most censured kings in history. The exiguity of the spheres in which they functioned only saved these little monsters from the obloquy of history.'<sup>2</sup> Our object in this book is to pursue them into their private lives and to bring them into the light of day. One could present a whole gallery of freaks, beginning with the Count of Blankenburg, whom the poet Liezevitz visited on a journey to Germany, and who was shown his collections of Bibles and distorting mirrors, Duke Christian of Schwarzburg, who occupied only a few wretched rooms in his castle of Sonderhausen in the Harz, but proudly showed his visitor rooms full of silver plate, statues of negroes, and stuffed bears.

'The madness of the Duke of Merseburg was really only melomania. He spent his ducal revenue filling a huge hall with bass viols of all sizes, in the centre of which was enthroned a gigantic double-bass.' The strings could only be plucked by climbing on a stool with the help of a bow as big as a ship's mast. 'A prince of Brunswick made a daily allowance of two barrels of Tokay in which bread was soaked for his favourites' parrots, plus twelve litres of the same wine for his supper and fourteen litres for his bath.'<sup>3</sup> A certain Duke of X— had four well-equipped trumpeters to blow calls during meals. One day he had a whim to see how long these men could blow without interruption. He suggested it to them. The unfortunate musicians, to please their master, did their best to gratify him. They blew for half an hour

<sup>1</sup> J. Scherr *Deutsche Kultur und Sittengeschichte*.

<sup>2</sup> Paul de Saint-Victor

<sup>3</sup> Paul de Saint-Victor



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without taking their trumpets from their mouths. The prince was not satisfied and ordered them to continue. They made renewed efforts but finally declared that they had no wind left. With great obstinacy the prince insisted. By way of persuasion he accompanied his arguments with so many blows of his cane, and the poor fellows were obliged to continue. Finally, as a result of blowing, one of them had a haemorrhage and lost so much blood that he expired two hours later.<sup>1</sup>

Ritter von Lang mentions a prince who insisted that his privy councillors should be at least six feet tall. He gives us a glimpse in 1784 into the council chamber of a certain prince of Ottingen-Wallerstein. On a table lay a pile of documents. To prove that his slightest wish could prevail the prince took one of them at random and by his signature gave it a validity which he then refused to the others. Lang goes on:

'I arrived in the middle of the morning. A solemn discussion began on the subject of a general ban on all dogs to be found on the princely territory of Ottingen. All the officials had to furnish detailed lists with the name of the dog, its shape, age, species and use. They had to add their own humble opinions. Guided by these lists, the council passed favourable resolutions in rapid succession on the subject of the dogs M<sup>é</sup>lac, Damit, Blanchet, Ouvre-l'Œil, Empoigne, etc. Things began to grow lively when they came to the dog Mordeur, and when it was the turn of a certain Pinceur from the district of Aufkirchen the whole council became extremely agitated. The recorder wanted him to be killed but the *Primus volens*, the owner of a younger brother of this same Pinceur, was loud in his praise of this magnificent animal. There was dissension and voices were raised. The President took a pinch of snuff. . . . Midday sounded. Each member took his hat, and when I asked anxiously how it would all end I was told "You have heard the details of the main business in hand we shall have to decide the whole case according to the documents, do you understand? According to the documents." '

<sup>1</sup> Mauvillon, op cit

The orgies at the court of Heidelberg, Fulda or Wurzburg, described by von Pollnitz, are quite nauseating. The bacchanalia celebrated in the forests by Duke Karl-Eugen of Wurtemberg have no resemblance to antiquity. Nor had the carnival of 1702 at the Hanoverian Court which Leibniz has recorded for us 'It was a Roman feast representing that given by Trimalchio in the *Satyricon*. . . When nature called, the person who played Trimalchio did not put himself out; if the call was urgent, he left the stage and returned without ceremony. Incidentally a chamber-pot of enormous size, in which he could have drowned at night, followed him everywhere.'

Possessed by devils and near to madness, they were perhaps only half-responsible for their antics and were a prey to an incoherence which was akin to insanity. Count Manteufel wrote in 1758 'Germany teems with princes and dukes, three-quarters of whom are not right in the head.' Many of the princely families suffered from physical degeneration which retarded their intellectual development. Sophia Wilhelmina of Bayreuth mentions the family of Hesse-Darmstadt. The ruler, suffering from a cancer of the nose, could hardly utter a word, but this did not prevent his leading a most dissolute life, his son only expressed himself in affected compliments and always seemed in a state of coma, his daughter giggled incessantly like a maniac and, as a result of her disorderly life, soon lapsed into idiocy. Another weak-minded individual was the Prince of Saxe-Merzburg who, during his walks in the town, had his wig stolen by little ragamuffins, he had a mania for stringed instruments and refused to recognize the son his wife bore him because he had not been born with a fiddle in his hand. But the record for perversion seems to have been held by that Margravine of Bayreuth depicted in the memoirs of Sophia Wilhelmina, who was not content until her daughter became pregnant by an adventurer who made her the mother of twins.

Such moral and physical instability doubtless accounts for the number of princely unions which remained without issue (Frederick II had no heir), and for the many young princes who were stillborn or survived for only a few months

Another consequence of the absolutism reigning in Germany was that the sovereign became more and more remote from his people. He only consented to speak to them at official audiences, which in themselves were only a semblance of personal contact.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, how could confidence be established between princes and subjects who—as was frequently the case—were not of the same religion, and were by this very fact suspicious of each other?

Only towards the end of the century were a few German voices raised to cause a breach in this principle of absolute power. Schlözer, in his *Politische Annalen*, had the courage to denounce the bad princes. The journalist K.-F. Moser writes: “The prince is responsible only to God.” This was the expression used by the great monarch of old. The formula has become the fashion in our little courts. A prince interposes God as judge between himself and his subjects and says precisely this: “I ask for neither your confidence nor your approval, I know you have reasons to criticize me but I do not wish to know them. You have but one duty to obey. If I am wrong accuse me before God. If you have complaints to utter, I do not wish to know them. Refer them to God.” And the same author goes on: “The appetite for power develops more and more. Taxes are imposed, the pleasure of the prince makes the states and the subjects grumble, until something breaks. . . Each of our courts wishes to be sovereign, each has the requisite number of soldiers required and imposes taxes. The subjects can protest as they will, but if they advance an opinion they are treated as criminals and rebels.”<sup>2</sup> Occasionally the Emperor, ex-

<sup>1</sup> By these audiences the prince hoped to acquire from his visitors information less distorted than that furnished by his ministers or favourites. The officials were asked for information on questions which he was likely to be asked in order that he might reply with authority. In this way, more than any other, he appeared to be aware of the aspirations of his people and acquired a popularity which increased his tyrannical power.

<sup>2</sup> In the course of our studies on the little German courts we shall come across quotations taken from works by the Mosers or by Moser. It must be noted here that these authors were unrelated, although their names are similar. On the one hand we find Johann-Jacob Moser (1701–1785) and his son the publicist, Karl-Friedrich (1723–94), the author of the *Patriotisches Archiv*, on the other Johann-Justus Moser (1720–94), also a publicist and author of the *Patriotische Phantasien*.

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asperated by these abuses of authority, decided to intervene. Thus he insisted that a count of Leiningen should be arrested and found guilty of vicious excesses, he sentenced Count Magnus zu Rheingrafenstein to ten years' imprisonment for fraud and forgery, another was placed in custody for callousness towards widows and orphans.<sup>1</sup>

But Napoleon's victories alone finally crushed the exercise of absolute power among the German princes.

<sup>1</sup> Perthes: *Das Deutsche Staatsleben vor der Revolution* (1845). The author quotes other similar cases in the same work.

## The Princes' Entourage



The nobles, heirs of the feudal knights, had remained until the end of the seventeenth century vain, spendthrift, debauched and tyrannical. At the beginning of the eighteenth century they became vassals of the new generation of potentates which was just beginning to appear. They hid their fundamental grossness under the most cultured exterior, and while remaining boorish despots tried to give an air of good-breeding to social occasions. They monopolized honours and closed the road of wealth to everyone. Chamfort wrote in his volume *Pensées*: 'The noble serves as an intermediary between the king and his people. Yes, precisely as the hound is the intermediary between the huntsman and the hare!'

Germany had an extraordinary taste for titles and nowhere was class distinction so apparent. To serve at court, to obtain a position—even as a mere chamberlain—the indispensable condition was to be able to justify a certain number of quarterings on your escutcheon. Even Goethe and Schiller, who became officials at the Court of Weimar, had to consent to see their names adorned with a *ron*.

Genius was rarely found in this class of gentry, which generally remained of limited culture.<sup>1</sup> Without birth, laurels were but a

<sup>1</sup> Leibniz complained of Hanover, where he lived, and of the mediocrity of the intellectual resources at court: 'Among the nobility, bent on the pleasures of hunting and the table, no intellectual curiosity, no elegant and polite conversation, no intermediate class between the scholars and the masses. The small number of erudite men has no merit other than a *pénible assiduité* [in French in the text]. Finally, the mass of the people is as unfamiliar with the things of the spirit as a *sourd au plaisir d'entendre un beau concert* (id.)'

poor recommendation, and even a famous career in the arts, letters, medicine or science conferred no privilege. Thus, except at a few courts such as Weimar, Gotha, Saxe-Meiningen and Berlin in the time of Frederick II, 'the enormous distinction in Germany between the nobility and the commoners nearly always prevents scholars from trafficking with the great, all the talents of the intellect give them less chance of being admitted to their table than an old parchment which sometimes only serves to prove that fifteen imbeciles in succession have procreated the cretinous lord who possesses it'.<sup>1</sup>

Frederick himself was not free of this form of snobbery. Although he prided himself on considering only personal qualities and was the protector of a number of men of letters and scholars, if several candidates applied for a post he would always prefer a worthless noble to a cultured bourgeois 'I always choose my officers from the nobility,' he said, 'for nobility nearly always has a sense of honour. It can be found among bourgeois of merit, but it is rarer, and in such cases it is better to keep them in one's service. If a noble loses his honour he is ostracised by his family, whereas a commoner who has committed some fraud can continue to run his father's business.'

The pride of the nobles in these little German states was unequalled. They considered themselves superior to the rest of humanity, and tried to trace the roots of their genealogical tree back to Noah's Ark. If by some rare exception a bourgeois obtained a position at court the nobleman took his revenge by harshly displaying his superiority. Vanity sometimes induced a somewhat clownish state of mind. A certain count once reproached

<sup>1</sup> Marquis d'Argens *Histoire de l'esprit humain*. There were some exceptions to this exclusion of intellectuals from princely circles. One can cite the case of the Margrave of Baden who, having attracted Lavater and Klopstock to his court, insisted that the latter should receive him in a dressing-gown on the occasion of his early morning visits, the Duke of Brunswick who lodged in his castle the Jew, Mendelssohn, and the Prince of Oldenburg who was on friendly terms with the poets Voss and Klopstock. The Emperor Joseph II, when reproached for associating with too many commoners, excused himself by declaring 'If I confined myself to relations with people of my own standing I should have to go down into the Kapuziner crypt and talk to my ancestors.'

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the pastor for having baptized his son with the same holy water he had used for the son of a drover. Another, considering death no leveler, was worried that his corpse might be mistaken on the day of the Last Judgement for a member of the lower classes. He gave orders that he should be buried with all his insignia, and insisted in his will that a large placard be nailed to the coffin to draw the attention of the divine Dispenser of Justice to his titles and qualities.

It was not only from pride that the nobility clung so tenaciously to their place in the social hierarchy; it must be noted that they enjoyed a number of tangible advantages. They were exempted from many taxes, occupied all the important posts in the administration and had the privilege of wearing a wig,<sup>1</sup> sword, and plumed hat, and of using a gold snuff-box. When a commoner was proposed for some post to Max of Bavaria he declared 'He must be an adventurer. I prefer a noble.' With a little luck a gentleman who considered marriage with a girl of middle-class family impossible could aspire to marry some prince's bastard, thus bettering his social position and his means of existence.<sup>2</sup>

We shall meet, of course, quite a number of cases where noblemen rose to the most exalted positions, becoming chief ministers, generals in command of an army, eminent statesmen, and amassed a fortune, but it did not necessarily follow that the mere fact of belonging to the privileged caste conferred opulence. A noble, if he wanted to live ostentatiously—as he was often forced to do—had to impose severe privations on his family circle. A man who possessed a carriage, horses and liveried flunkeys found himself at home forced to eat soup and potatoes spiced with the hope of soon being able to enjoy a more succulent repast at the prince's table.

<sup>1</sup> In the college founded at Stuttgart by the Duke of Württemberg only the sons of noblemen and officers could wear a powdered wig. Schiller, a pupil in this institution, had a right to use powder as the son of an officer, but a democrat from birth, was indignant that he should enjoy this particular privilege.

<sup>2</sup> A natural daughter of Karl Theodor of the Palatinate married a Prince of Eisenberg, three others, the result of liaisons with servant girls, managed to marry into the aristocracy.

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'If things remain as they are,' says Collin, 'half Germany will be titled. But,' he adds, 'one gets lost if one tries to distinguish between the various titles, which differ widely in value' There were in fact many degrees of nobility the high nobility, the gentry, the low and the new nobility, and it was very rare that one category married with the other Foreigners were lost in a hopeless maze A German count or even an ordinary gentleman would be shocked if he were called *mein Herr* (and yet this is how one addresses God) and would insist upon being called 'Gracious Lord', or 'Your Grace'<sup>1</sup> It was a matter of great embarrassment when one had to write a letter Rather than make a mistake in the protocol, people were in the habit of writing the address in French.

It was often possible for the bourgeois to acquire a title. The goal could be reached in several ways First and foremost there was the legitimate hope of receiving one from the Emperor in reward for services rendered, but this was chiefly obtained by money. There were markets everywhere where titles could be bought In the Palatinate, under Karl-Theodor, the title Count of the Empire cost only 900 to 1,000 florins, that of Count 600 to 700 and a simple knighthood 100 to 500. True, in 1722 the Emperor Charles IV banned this marketing in titles, but snobbery prevailed The Emperor Joseph II said to Casanova 'I do not respect people who buy titles.' 'And what of those who sell them, sire?' replied the adventurer

There remained another devious way of entering the privileged classes --the admission into one of the great Orders of Chivalry, which automatically conferred a title The sale of insignia was current in Berlin, the Archbishop of Cologne negotiated the Order of St Michael, the Margrave of Bayreuth the Order of the Black Eagle, etc.

A prince's entourage included various indispensable persons in addition to the nobility

To begin with--the officials They teemed in Germany as in no

<sup>1</sup> Mauvillon *op cit*



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other country. It was reasonable that a great city like Vienna could muster 1,700 chamberlains and Bavaria in the time of Karl-Theodor 421, Saxony under the ministry of Bruhl 236, and the Württemberg of Karl-Eugen 150,<sup>1</sup> but what of the tiny states which maintained a host of officials? The Archbishop of Mainz possessed 1,960, of whom 1,300 were ecclesiastics (nearly the entire clergy of the Electorate), and yet he had only 31,800 subjects. The small principality of Zweibrücken possessed 500, and Lesingen, which was even smaller, 50 councillors, 18 secretaries and 50 junior stewards. The Prince of Hildburghausen, whose lands were hardly more than five miles square, boasted a Marshal of the Household, Master of the Royal Hunt, Master of the Horse, an Officer of the Hunt, a Grand Forester and an equerry in charge of the sovereign's travelling escort, etc.<sup>2</sup>

The post of Councillor, which conferred the title of Excellency, was particularly coveted,<sup>3</sup> that of Privy Councillor allowed access to the prince's private sessions, the Aulic Councillor afforded the rank of magistrate, Councillor of the Chamber allowed its holder to administer public finance and the prince's privy purse. 'Germany,' wrote K.-F. Moser, 'was inundated with councillors. Had these people really given counsel, there would have been a dreadful chaos, but the councillors were so privy that no one ever heard them speak. All of them kept their secrets to themselves.'<sup>4</sup>

The post of Councillor was considered moderately well paid (3,500 to 4,000 florins when it was in the hands of a nobleman, 2,500 in the case of a commoner) and sometimes offered the advantage of conferring a title. But above all it gave full right to be at court, to be in the limelight and to obtain a good seat at the theatre or a fête, a public ceremony or a meal.

When this post was not obtained by some court intrigue it was

<sup>1</sup> Frederick II came a good last with only sixty Chamberlains, miserably paid and paid so irregularly that they were sometimes forced to wait until an advanced age to receive all their arrears.

<sup>2</sup> Perthes, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> 'Everything revolves around this happy title of Excellency which they all demand' (Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu).

<sup>4</sup> K.-F. Moser *Patriotisches Archiv*

bought, and sometimes at a very high price. The sale of official posts was proverbial in the Palatinate and hardly less so in Saxony at the time of the Bruhl ministry. Friedrich-Wilhelm of Prussia was delighted to use the profits from the sale of offices for his military expenses. His son, Frederick II, tried to reverse this by forbidding the bartering of offices in his states, a traffic which doubled in volume under his successor. The Estates of Wurttemberg insisted that Duke Karl-Eugen should put a brake on such speculation. Erthal, Bishop of Wurzburg, and Karl-Augustus of Weimar issued decrees to punish those who had acquired certain offices; the penalties were heavy and prescribed death in the case of a second offence.

All these posts obtained by favour of money were by no means permanent acquisitions. The holder knew, in fact, that his dismissal depended on the whim of the prince and could be effected at any moment, without his having a right to any indemnity or pension. Thus the officials had only one aim—to line their pockets while they were in office. The princes themselves found this ambition very excusable. The Elector Palatine, Johann-Wilhelm, went so far as to make fun of the ingenuous honesty of one of his councillors, Count Manderschied. When the latter one day pointed out the speed at which the silver plate was being stolen at court, so that the princely table service would soon be lacking in the bare necessities, and asked that the culprits should be punished, Johann-Wilhelm listened to his report with cynical impassiveness and replied: ‘Instead of bothering your head about it, steal something too.’<sup>1</sup> Frederick II had few illusions as to the integrity of his officials. The widow of an army contractor complained that her husband’s death had left her penniless. To eject the petitioner the King used this argument: ‘I tied the donkey to the manger rack, why didn’t he eat?’

Although the princes closed their eyes to the corruption of their officials, they did not refrain from treating them worse than the lowest valet. Ruled with a rod of iron, these employees had to conform to their master’s slightest whim. Rutter von Lang, a privy councillor, shows us just how ludicrous were the eccentrici-

<sup>1</sup> K.-F. Moser, *op. cit.*, Book 12

ties of a prince he once visited. To participate in one of his host's gala hunts, Lang, who was normally clean-shaven, had to acquire a pair of false moustaches

Badly paid and reduced to the few illicit profits they could glean, the officials of the small German courts were, as a general rule, somewhat impoverished and if they had the slightest ambition to make a fortune they were not indifferent to tips from foreigners. This also applied to the ministers. But in addition to this welcome manna for the underlings, England, Austria, and above all France, greased the palms of the needy little princes, for the masters were just as venal as the flunkys. Money was the argument used by Louis XIV to reduce the small German principalities to a state of vassalage, and to give them something to put in the pot. It cost less to conquer a state with the ring of silver than with weapons. The French subsidies furnished to Germany, completely ruined by the Thirty Years War, amounted to almost the entire currency in circulation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, thus allowed the country to recover economically and the princes to spend as they felt inclined. When France was at war with Austria, certain princes received charity from Paris with one hand and from Vienna with the other. The Elector of Cologne received a pension of 20,000 thalers from Louis XIV, between 1672 and 1674 the Duke of Hanover obtained from France 1,722,000 livres in exchange for a contingent of troops and the use of his country's strongholds, Max-Emmanuel of Bavaria extorted 40,000 thalers a month for ten years for allowing the French army to pass through his lands and for opposing the passage of the Imperial troops. Between 1750 and 1772 it cost France 137,000,000 livres to buy Saxony, Wurttemberg and Bavaria, in the course of the Thirty Years War one finds the Margraves of Ansbach and Bayreuth leasing armed contingents to the French, knowing they were to be used against their brother-in-law, Frederick II. In 1758, in the course of a conversation with Mitchell, the English Ambassador in Berlin, Frederick discussed the defeat suffered by the English fleet off Rochefort.

'Well,' said the King, 'what is the King of England going to do now?'

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'Whatever he can, sire He'll place everything in the hands of God'

'Ha, ha, I didn't know he had Him for an ally.'

'Indeed, He's our most solid ally and the one to whom we pay no subsidies'

'But just look how He treats you!'<sup>1</sup>

There is one character we find at most of the German courts—the favourite. In the eighteenth century she acquired an ascendancy she had never previously known in Germany. Before the Reformation the princes concealed their amours. Until the end of the seventeenth century public opinion, and in particular that of the clergy, was hostile to mistresses. The last rites were refused to Fraulein von Neitschutz, the favourite of Johann-Georg IV of Saxony, the sacrament was forbidden to Eberhard-Ludwig of Wurtemberg while his liaison with the Gravenitz lasted.

The situation changed with the eighteenth century. In his notes on a journey to Germany, Montesquieu records this observation by Baron von Stern, chief minister to the Duke of Brunswick: 'The princes are all born with an inclination for sensuality and the children are brought up and encouraged in this. Sensuality is always the second passion among princes. Thus, if he is a miser, his primary passion is avarice, followed by lust. If lust be the dominant passion, it exceeds all bounds.'

This taste for sensuality, when not transmitted to the princes by heredity, was inculcated in them by the courtiers whose main preoccupation was to lull the conscience of their master to sleep with pleasure and debauch in order to ward off a possible awakening of his barbarity. Besides, was it not right, as in everything else, to follow the example of Versailles, where the Pompadours reigned and where a privileged place was always given to the favourite? From now onwards the mistress seemed to be an attribute of supreme power. She became such a necessary adjunct that the prelates themselves, even if they governed but few subjects,

<sup>1</sup> *Journal historique de Collé*, 1758

thought it incumbent upon them to advertise some appearance of a liaison.

Lauremburg said of a Prince of Baden who lived without an accredited mistress 'That is unaristocratic and only fit for the common Germans' For a sovereign to be without a mistress was so inconceivable that K.-F. Moser writes 'The burgher who sees a young prince riding back from church where he has married a charming princess says quite naturally "Now all we can wish for is a delicious mistress for our prince" This good burgher knowing that the father and grandfather of the newly married prince had kept mistresses, imagined that it was a necessary appanage of princely dignity'<sup>1</sup>

In the eighteenth century, public opinion agreed that the presence of a mistress at court offered more advantages than disadvantages. It seemed that, without this indispensable element, the principal source of favours was in danger of drying up. Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, in order to appease the jealousies of his various subjects, had constantly to exhibit two mistresses, one Saxon and the other Polish. Had not Louis XIV maintained, 'Royal blood does not sully'? From then onwards to furnish a favourite to the prince became an honour for the nobility and a source of substantial profit for the husband. 'At the Court of Dresden,' writes Wolframsdorf, 'there are a number of people who, incapable of living on their own resources, sacrifice their wives to keep themselves in favour.'<sup>2</sup>

In the course of this book we shall meet favourites of all classes. Some were girls of humble birth, the Duke of Württemberg remained for twenty years a victim of the Gravenitz, an adventuress

<sup>1</sup> K.-F. Moser, op cit

<sup>2</sup> Wolframsdorf *Bild des Polnischen Hofes*. Montesquieu relates an anecdote which bears witness to the laxity of Saxon morals. 'When the King of Poland (Stanislas Leszcinski) was in Saxony with the King of Sweden, a miller complained to him that the valet of Prince Lubomirski's equeury had taken away his wife. The King sent for the valet who said to him "Sire, return me mine, whom my master [the equeury] has taken away." Next he spoke to the equeury who replied "Sire, return me mine, whom Prince Lubomirski has taken away." At last he called for Prince Lubomirski who said "Sire, then return me mine, whom King Augustus has taken from me."'

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of low extraction, the Duke of Hanover was entirely dominated by the Platen, a Margrave of Baden was only happy in the company of a harem of young actresses.

However, other favourites were cultured and charming, such as Fraulein von Degenfeld, mistress of an Elector Palatine and mother of the Raugraves with whom the Duchess of Orléans, their half-sister, kept up such an affectionate correspondence, another who combined beauty, intelligence and charity was Aurora von Kongsmark, mistress of Augustus of Saxony.

It must be admitted, however, that the majority of favourites were intriguers and ambitious women whose role in Germany was probably more pernicious than that played by their sisters in France. To impose one's power on a great country is a more arduous task than to subject to the most imperious yoke a weak, defenceless prince, the supreme sovereign of a few square miles. Provided the favourite came from a good house, public opinion was not outraged. It even permitted the prince to advertise his liaison. It was merely considered picturesque when Augustus of Saxony met five of his mistresses at a supper offered by the Queen of Prussia. Karl-Eugen of Wurtemberg could visit the courts of Germany accompanied by the Countess Hohenheim with whom he lived, and the Margrave of Ansbach could officially present his mistress Lady Craven to the Berlin Court.

A class of people one would be surprised not to meet at the majority of the German eighteenth-century courts was the buffoons and the adventurers. Mauvillon writes:

'As soon as a German prince feels sad or ill-tempered—for one is not inclined to laugh every day—the jester has only to bare his shoulders. It is a pleasure to see how they beat him. The German lords delight in thrashing people and one must admit that they thrash well. . . . The jesters alone make a fortune in this country. The craze to have one is extraordinary. No sovereign keeps less than two or three, and with some of the more powerful there are few posts more lucrative than that of chief jester, it may be compared with that of the chief black eunuch

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in a harem. The noblemen and gentry of this country always have some lackey who takes the place of the buffoon . . . but it is the prerogative of the sovereign to give letters patent to court jesters<sup>1</sup>

The buffoons were not necessarily recruited from among the simple-minded. People of worth, even scholars, could be appointed by the prince to act as entertainers. 'It is no strange thing to see here an accredited buffoon who is a philosopher and orator. An able professor, well known in the realm of letters, showed himself to have great wit. He was immediately required to be a buffoon and the sovereign forced him to become one.'<sup>2</sup>

The post of jester was sometimes held by dwarfs. This will account for Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu's surprise on her arrival in Germany where she came face to face with these freaks for the first time.

'I forgot to tell you,' she writes, 'one curiosity in all the German courts, which I cannot forbear taking notice of. All the princes keep favourite dwarfs. The Emperor and Empress have two of these little monsters, as ugly as devils, especially the female, but they are all bedaubed with diamonds, and stand at her Majesty's elbow in all public places. The Duke of Wolfenbützel has one, and the Duchess of Blankenburg is not without hers, but indeed the most proportionable I ever saw. I am told the King of Denmark has so far improved upon this fashion, that his dwarf is his chief minister. I can assign no reason for their fondness for these pieces of deformity, but the opinion all the absolute princes have, that it is below them to converse with the rest of mankind, and not to be quite alone, they are forced to seek their companions among the refuse of human nature, these creatures being the only part of their court privileged to talk freely to them.'<sup>3</sup>

If Lady Wortley-Montagu visited more of the small German courts, she would no doubt have been even more surprised to find that in several of them little villages had been built in the neigh-

<sup>1</sup> Mauvillon, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu to her sister, the Countess of Mai, dated Vienna, January 1717.

bourhood of the royal palace, composed of dwarf houses to suit the stature of their inhabitants. Buffoons and dwarfs did not disappear from Saxony until the middle of the century, they were still to be found in Bavaria in 1763. On occasions they played a rôle of great importance in affairs of state and in the distribution of their masters' favours.

Nowhere else did cosmopolitan adventurers find a happier hunting ground than in these little German courts. Is it surprising that they were received with enthusiasm everywhere? Anyone who gave pleasure, if only for an hour, and relieved boredom—the prince's worst enemy—was welcomed without question about his origin. The adventurers, sporting high-sounding names, appeared from one day to the next wearing fantastic uniforms and covered with precious stones. With nonchalant gestures they engaged the best rooms in the best inns, they spoke every language and claimed acquaintance with all the crowned heads and people of importance. They made their way into the court, where they entertained, they were esteemed, and nobody bothered about the authenticity of their titles. They brought some distraction into the life of a small town with its few paltry streets. They were full of plans and promises, devising new taxes or systems for lotteries, claiming to be alchemists or makers of gold, and they were therefore well regarded by the impoverished princes. They were tolerated, provided they did not steal too brazenly. They were spies for the prince who loved war, they were wits and philosophers when necessary. They cheated the superstitious with horoscopes, the gamblers with marked cards and duped the ingenuous by their worldly elegance.

From the Middle Ages, Germany had been a great believer in alchemy. Alchemists were to be found in the service of the Emperor (in 1770, Wraxall, an Englishman, estimated the number of people in Vienna who were still interested in the hermetic sciences at 7,000), of Friedrich-Wilhelm I of Prussia, Augustus the Strong of Saxony, Max-Joseph of Bavaria, the Landgrave Ludwig of Hesse (a great specialist in the cabala), and even by the Bishop of Würzburg. The makers of gold, despite their frequent setbacks, always found dupes.



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Among the 'confidence men' who are to be found in the pages of eighteenth-century history some are so well known that to mention their names is enough. Casanova is, for example, the most famous among them. He managed to be well esteemed even at the ecclesiastical courts and we know that, even after breaking the bank with the Archbishop of Cologne, the prelate begged him to stay for another week on his estates. There was also the Count of Saint-Germain who, revered as a demigod, died in the arms of the Duke of Hanover.

But there were others whose reputation was less established, such as Theodor von Neuhof, the German Casanova from Westphalia who, after cheating many of the German princes, became King of Corsica and died in poverty in London, and Bühren who, at the end of his career, became the lover of Catherine the Great and Duke of Courland. And finally Baron von Pollnitz, the perfect type of vagabond adventurer whose name 'has made so much noise in the world'.<sup>1</sup> He will be quoted so often in the course of this work that I feel it may be useful to give a brief sketch of his career.

Baron Karl-Ludwig von Pollnitz, a nobleman from Brandenburg, throughout his life as a courtier sought to acquire the resources he lacked to cut a good figure in society.<sup>2</sup> He started his career in France where he was quickly unmasked. The Duchess of Orléans warned her half-sister, the Raugravine Luise 'Pollnitz is an *excroût*. He cannot show himself in France because he has cheated everybody and he owes money right and left'.<sup>3</sup> The Baron then went to the Court of Vienna, where he lived on the favours of the Empress. But soon the King of Prussia, Friedrich-Wilhelm I, intrigued by reading the memoirs which the adventurer had just published to earn some money, summoned him to his court and Pollnitz, as Sophia Wilhelmina relates, 'knew so well how to

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of the Margravine of Bayreuth.

<sup>2</sup> Pollnitz has left us his memoirs in the form of letters in which he describes his visits to all the courts of Europe, a study on *la Saxe galante* and the *Mémoires pour servir l'Histoire de Brandebourg* (3 vols., 1734). The sole value of these works, which are written with obvious partiality, lies in the picturesque anecdotes and the descriptions of things he saw.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of 26th January 1719.

insinuate himself into the King's graces that he obtained a pension of 1,500 crowns. He managed to retain the King's favour throughout his life and was present at his death-bed.'

Pollnitz also managed to find favour with the young Sophia-Wilhelmina who, on becoming Margravine of Bayreuth, summoned him to her court. She gives a flattering portrait of the courtier: 'This man,' she writes in her memoirs, 'has great wit and is well read, his conversation is very agreeable, he is good-hearted, but he has neither integrity nor judgment and sins for the most part from carelessness.' The Princess, who obviously found the adventurer 'very amusing and resourceful', insisted that he should accompany her to Ems and Frankfort for the coronation of the Emperor Charles VII.

In 1744, Pollnitz, a widower of fifty-two, despondent at his failure to marry a rich heiress from Nuremberg, finally remarried in Berlin. Frederick II used him on several shady missions, then, tired of his services, dismissed him. 'Send me another parrot,' he wrote to his ambassador in Paris. The disgraced 'parrot' took to flight across Europe 'falling in love'—to use Walpole's expression—with all the princes whom he thought he could dupe or who fed him well, and confining his severity to those who appeared to resist his seductions. He was always short of money and did not hesitate to change his religion three times in the hope of acquiring a post which would get him out of his difficulties. He finally died in Berlin in 1775 and Frederick II, by way of an obituary, wrote to Voltaire 'Old Pollnitz died as he lived—a rogue to the last moment. No one regrets him . . . except his creditors.'<sup>1</sup>

To maintain the balance of that fragile edifice, a German court, still apparently immersed in the medieval chaos from which other European states had long since emerged, and to weld together the disparate elements which were to be found there, the princes invented etiquette. Voltaire declared 'In the small courts the squabbles and the feuds are far more bitter than in the great monar-

<sup>1</sup> Letter of the 15th August 1775

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chies.' Doubtless for this reason, etiquette became stricter here than anywhere else; it was based on that of Versailles, but exaggerated by local usage. Protocol governed the most insignificant actions in life at court. Occasionally the questions it raised were serious enough to be submitted to authorities such as Leibniz. He laid down the number of horses to be harnessed to a carriage, the number of pages who should attend a prince, and the seating of the guests at the sovereign's table <sup>1</sup>

The Electors alone used large forks and knives, they sat in chairs of red velvet, while the guests were only entitled to green velvet. Nothing was left to chance in the order of processions where the rank of the individual corresponded not so much to the importance of his title as to the greatness of his house. At the coronation of the Emperor Charles VI an old Count of Nassau could say to a petty sovereign 'You must learn, sir, that a prince like you must walk behind counts like me.'

The Margravine of Bayreuth describes the arguments that arose between courtiers when the order of precedence for their entry into the royal apartments was fixed, and the rivalries that broke out between ladies vying for the privilege of the *tabouret*. 'When an exalted person is addressed,' writes Mauvillon, 'the affected laugh, the bowed head and lowered eyes are *de rigueur*. How boring are the majority of your counts mediate or immediate of the Empire! What titles, what bowings and scraping, what ceremonies, what kissing of hands! You have to kiss the hem of the countess's dress at the risk of banging your nose on the ground, with your hat on one side and your cane on the other.' Baron Wiedemann, the Austrian Ambassador in Munich in 1750, wrote a twenty-one-page dispatch to the Court of Vienna, enumerating the vicissitudes he suffered in Bavaria on account of etiquette <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Prince of Thurn and Taxis one day found himself in a dilemma. Receiving at his table his accredited ministers, he forgot to assign to each guest the place he was to occupy. This omission resulted in arguments and indignant protests. Ten pamphlets appeared on the occasion of this scandal. The litigation was finally ended by an Imperial Decree condemning the bad organization of the ceremony (Vehse).

<sup>2</sup> The contagion of etiquette spread even to the servants, as is shown in this colloquy reported by Lord Malmesbury between the servant of the

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Only towards 1780, in the period of reaction against absolute power, did etiquette relax in Germany. From then onwards a freedom of manners was affected. No more bows, only a slight nod of the head, antiquated politeness was finished, to be replaced in future by civility.

Grand Duke of Russia and a coachman of Frederick II. The two men in question entering a tavern raised the question of precedence. 'What is your rank?' asked the Prussian 'Lieutenant-Colonel'. 'Well, I'm a Colonel,' replied the Prussian, 'so I go in before you' (*Diary and Correspondence*, 1776).

## The Palaces and their Architects



Germany was the last country to emerge from that feudal period where an architecture which was purely military provided for defence and afforded protection against a hostile neighbour. From the end of the seventeenth century internecine struggles became increasingly rare, the need for defence disappeared and fortresses ceased to have any justification. In a dwelling, no one thought of security any more, but of pleasure. Now houses had to be roomy and spacious. To inaugurate this pleasant style demanded by the new mode of life, Germany, deprived of art since the end of the Thirty Years War, turned her eyes towards Italy and France. Versailles, Marly, Saint-Cloud, Sceaux and Meudon were places which made a dazzling impression on the minds of the petty sovereigns who visited them. A stimulus was given to all the German courts and between 1690 and 1730, after a long period of stagnation, all the palaces beyond the Rhine were built or transformed. During those forty years alone rose the castles of Schonbrunn (1695), Berlin (1698), Mannheim (1699), Schleissheim near Munich (1701), Ludwigsburg near Stuttgart (1704), Rastatt (1705), etc., and building continued everywhere at the same accelerated pace.<sup>1</sup>

It must also be noted that when Germany was seized with this passion for building, the princes, following the example of Louis XIV, often abandoned their historic capitals and transplanted their

<sup>1</sup> Two authors—Louis Réau and Pierre du Colombier—have specialized and produced erudite studies of German architecture and the various foreign influences—particularly French—exercised on it during the eighteenth century (Louis Réau *Histoire de l'Expansion de l'Art Français, L'Europe française, L'Art français sur le Rhin*. Pierre du Colombier *L'Art français dans les cours rhénanes*).

palaces into new localities. The Archbishop of Cologne settled in Bonn, the Elector of Trier at Coblenz, the Elector of the Palatinate left his old ruined castle of Heidelberg to found the town of Mannheim.

In trying to get their share of so much new building, foreign influences came into conflict. Italy found it easy to enter Southern Germany, already under the yoke of the Jesuits, she had no difficulty in bringing within her artistic orbit territories with which she already had commercial relations. Baroque, coming from Italy, flourished in Austria and Bavaria where it left its mark until the day when Maria Theresa, making a political alliance with France, opened the door to French influence.<sup>1</sup> Italian art penetrated as far as Baden (the castle of Rastatt is the work of a pupil of Bernini), Württemberg (the castle of Stuttgart was begun by Rott), and Ludwigsburg by Frisoni), Dresden (the court chapel was by Chausser), and Mannheim (the Jesuit Church is the work of Balthasar). However, thanks to the influence of great architects such as Fischer von Erlach and Hildebrandt, the southern countries soon shook off the foreign yoke. As a result, in Bavaria the castles of Nymphenburg and Schleissheim were also built, in the heavy style, it is true, but directly inspired by Versailles.

Baroque, which for many is only a blossoming of bad taste, seems to us on the contrary the brilliant caprice of a slightly deranged imagination. The eye is charmed, the intellect amused by the affectation in stone which evokes masked balls, light music and licentious fêtes.

In the Rhineland French influence had, so to speak, no artistic frontier to cross and was easily imposed. Nevertheless the reputation of Italian architects was so well established that some of them were summoned to build palaces in the Rhine Valley (the palace of Bonn was begun by Zuccati). This alone proves how invidious it is to attempt to trace two precise spheres of influence in German architecture in the eighteenth century, and how prudent it is to confine oneself to pointing out general tendencies.

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to note that the first manifestation of baroque in Germany was at Freudenstadt, in the Black Forest, where the main square is entirely in the baroque style, dating from 1599.

## THE PALACES AND THEIR ARCHITECTS

Rococo was born from the death agonies of baroque, of which it is the apotheosis. It hardly appears except in interior decoration, which remained its principal domain. Most German authors quite rightly consider it as a French importation. That it did not preserve the limits and moderation in Germany which France had given it, was a matter of climate and temperament. German rococo, the reaction against Italian baroque, was a flight of the imagination which refused to let anything rest, it introduced spirals, twists, roses everywhere, it borrowed its forms from flowers, plants and shellfish. Admittedly its very emphasis produces a heaviness which sometimes appears intolerable. However, even in its extravagance there is an insolent grace, and it proclaimed to the Germans the triumph of French elegance. Rococo was not easily imposed on the neighbours of France and their architects resisted it for a long time before adopting it, so opposed was it to German taste. Then the princes raved about it. This style made its first appearance with Oppenord and Cuvillies, two artists of Flemish origin but entirely French in outlook. Cuvillies collaborated in the decoration of the castle of Brühl in that region of Cologne which, already permeated by French art, considered Paris rather than Vienna to be the political and artistic capital of Europe. He then went to Munich and his works soon set the tone for the whole of Germany. After this castles arose everywhere full of that enchanting yet somewhat grotesque splendour in which rococo delights, tormented and complicated by the fantasy of local artists.

The return of the 'classical'—as the German art critics call it—made itself felt towards the end of Louis XV's reign. The studies of Winckelmann on the art of antiquity aroused the enthusiasm of German architects who, with their customary exaggeration, adopted the new formulae. A style was suddenly born of a severity and unbearable coldness which neither the Louis XVI period nor that of the Empire produced in France where the transition took place almost unnoticed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Although nothing could be more tiresome and boring than a description of places, we are often obliged—and we must apologize—to undertake the unrewarding task of taking the reader into the residences of our

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Germany at the end of the seventeenth century abounded in architects of great talent. They were, for the most part, old soldiers or military engineers who built solidly with great technical efficiency.<sup>1</sup> By realizing a synthesis between different styles, they often achieved true originality. Then came the period when, for his artistic education to be considered complete, the German architect had to saturate himself in French art and frequent some Parisian workshop like that of Robert de Cotte, or Boffrand.<sup>2</sup> Artists like Fischer and Hildebrandt in Austria, Max von Welsch in the Rhineland, Poppelmann in Saxony, Schütter in Prussia, Gondard in Bavaria and many others, all studied for a time in Paris.

In the second half of the eighteenth century the school of Blondel dominated German architecture and its leader was often summoned to give his advice on the building of palaces and castles. In those days it was considered that the German architects understood better how to produce a sumptuous and showy exterior while French artists retained their superiority in questions of comfort, interior decoration and the distribution of the apartments.

To sum up: in the eighteenth century, the prince who wished to build a palace, or to modernize some dwelling judged old-fashioned, had the choice of four systems—we shall see that they employed all of them. 1. To ask a Frenchman to furnish plans

characters. May these descriptions arouse in those who are interested in art a desire to visit these houses which we ourselves have visited with so much pleasure. (Some of them have, however, fallen victim to the bombing of Germany and no longer exist.)

4. F. W. Neumann, for example, one of the most famous, began his career as an artilleryman in the Franconian Army and took part in the war against the Turks. Von Welsch built the fortifications of Mainz. (Note that on the contrary, Kleber started his career as an architect.) The German princes had grown used to making the French architects they employed officers in their army. La Guepière was a colonel, Froismont a captain, but both of them would have been hard put to it to command a regiment.

<sup>2</sup> Robert de Cotte, Mansart's brother-in-law and his successor as first architect to the king at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was renowned in Europe and worked for a great number of small German sovereigns. According to Louis Réau, he exercised 'a world-wide magic-trick.'



from Paris according to given specifications (as in the case of Robert de Cotte, Boffrand, etc.), 2 To persuade a Frenchman to send one of his juniors to carry out the work (de Cotte sent Fortier and Hauberat to Bonn), 3 To persuade a French architect to delegate his powers to a German colleague already in the prince's service (this presented inconveniences, not the least being a long exchange of views by letter which slowed down the work), 4 To insist that the French architect lived *in situ* for the duration of the building (Pigage settled in the Palatinate, La Guépière in Württemberg and Ixnard at Coblenz)

Whatever the circumstances, the princes, dazzled by the prestige of Louis XIV and the brilliance of Versailles and obsessed by the craze for erecting buildings in the French manner which would ruin them, were never completely happy unless they had a Parisian architect to deal with and Germany, which had become a marvellous outlet for French artists, welcomed a galaxy of talent Fortier, Hauberat, Pigage, La Guépière, Ixnard, Patte, etc. The latter, who entered the service of the Duke of Zweibrücken, could write with pride in 1765 'Paris is to Europe what Greece was when art triumphed there. She furnishes artists to the rest of the world'<sup>1</sup>

The architects were not alone in succumbing to French models, the artists, painters, sculptors, engravers, decorators and weavers, who vied in embellishing the interiors, found themselves undergoing the same influence. The Marquis d'Argens writes 'It would appear that many foreign nations are losing the prejudice that Italians are the only great painters. They are beginning to give credit to the French.' Between 1758 and 1787, seventy-six names of German painters figure in the registers of the Académie de Paris and many others worked in the Parisian studios. Zick, the official painter to several Rhenish courts, was on good terms with Boucher in 1757, the two Tischbeins were pupils of Van Loo, Wille, Heinsius and Mannlich (court painter to the Duke of

<sup>1</sup> Preface to a work by Patte entitled *Monuments érigés en France à la gloire de Louis XV*, 1765

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Zweibrücken), like many of their colleagues, spent long periods in Paris. Frenchmen such as Pesne, Louis Silvestre and Hutin remained for a long time in Germany, the former in Berlin, the latter in Dresden. With a few exceptions, most of them concentrated on portraits, leaving the great mural decorations to the Italians, who were unrivalled in this sphere.

Among the French sculptors, Pigalle, Adam, Bouchardon, Coustou, Lemoyne and Vassé received many orders from German sovereigns. Monnot decorated the famous 'Baths of the Landgrave of Hesse' at Cassel. Finally, one cannot estimate the purchases of furniture made by the princes in Paris, nor the number of the artisans, weavers and decorators who were engaged to instal factories and workshops in Germany on the Paris model.

Until the Renaissance, gardens were merely an accessory, often situated some way from the house. Since the appearance of baroque, an Italian creation, they formed part of the palace. Their architecture entailed the laying-out of dells, differences of level to allow the creation of terraces, and fountains (the prototype of this style is the Villa d'Este at Tivoli). Then France absorbed the art of the garden, introducing into it a new and powerful concept. This demanded a flat space, occupied by vast lawns, drives bordered with ornamental trees, statues, vases, basins—a décor which prolonged the interior perspectives of the apartments. A garden by Le Notre, which was as imposing as the royalty whose calm power it reflected and which has been called the 'Jardin de l'Intelligence', sacrificed Nature entirely to Art. With its flower-beds, lawns, coloured pebbles encrusted like mosaics, its lakes whose silence was disturbed only by the murmur of the fountains, this garden strictly obeyed the laws of geometry.

Although Germany undoubtedly succumbed to the seduction of the French classical garden, she hesitated between Italian and French methods. One gradually realizes that the gardens of Brühl near Bonn were laid out by a Frenchman, Girard; that those of Herrenhausen near Hanover, which have been preserved almost intact, are the work of another Frenchman, Charbonnier, a pupil

of Le Nôtre, and that the gardens of Nymphenburg near Munich, begun by Italians, were continued in 1716 by Girard and Effner, a Frenchman and a German.

It is all the more difficult to lay down hard and fast rules on the subject since many of the most magnificent parks laid out in the eighteenth century have, alas, completely disappeared. We only know from engravings of the period the garden of Ludwigsburg, completely French but designed by the Italian Frisoni, those of Pommersfelden, La Favorite near Mainz, and Werneck, carried out from the plans of J. B. Neumann in 1733, and Seehof near Bamberg, and Garbach, the works of von Welsch.

In Germany as elsewhere, the fashion died for these gardens drawn with a ruler, with their monotonous regularity and artifice.<sup>1</sup>

A sentimental reaction set in, resulting from the 'Back-to-Nature' creed extolled by Rousseau and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. It dethroned the beautiful classical gardens and gave them the *coup de grâce*. The 'English garden' was born with its winding paths and surrounding meadows dotted with clumps of trees. Everywhere we shall find and deplore this mania for transforming the old park according to the new formulæ, whether in Hanover—where the change was better justified than elsewhere, the reigning prince being also King of England—in the Palatinate (the gardens of Schwetzingen) or at Bayreuth (the gardens of the Hermitage), etc.

Finally, picturesque exaggeration surpassed acceptable bounds, and the garden was cluttered up with pagodas, kiosks, minarets, Greek temples, artificial ruins and rustic huts. In the park of

<sup>1</sup> Walpole, one of the first champions of the new ideas in the matter of gardens, writes ironically 'When a Frenchman hears mention of the Garden of Eden, I have no doubt that he concludes it to have been something approaching the gardens of Versailles with its hedges cut in cradle form.' In 1728 William Langley, in his volume *New Principles in the Art of Gardens*, attacked Le Nôtre's methods, banished the straight line and advised an irregularity which would give the illusion of nature. However, according to this author it was fitting that this illusion should be produced artificially. If the landscape lacked ruins, they would have to be built. From 1730 onwards, Montesquieu travelling in England was enchanted by the completely new aspect of the gardens he saw there.

Worlitz, near Dessau, they went so far as to reproduce in accurate detail the poplars of Ermenonville with Rousseau's tomb. This was called 'the Chinese garden'.

From now on, to conform to the fashion the German princes rivalled each other in ruinous whims, in fantastic and ridiculous inventions, neglecting the warnings of men of taste such as the Prince de Ligne, who wrote 'I wish it to be French for the beautiful, English for polish, Dutch for cleanliness, Chinese for singularity, Italian for the view. Not too much Chinese! That is too trashy and becomes commonplace. If need be, build a few rustic shelters in an isolated spot to introduce some alien element, that can only be agreeable, but one must be wise even at the height of folly.'<sup>1</sup> Schiller was also of the opinion that 'although the French garden possessed a certain degree of harmony and architectural grandeur' the English garden on the other hand lapsed into 'peevishness and pettiness'.

One can readily judge the lapses of bad taste committed by the German princes when one reads the descriptions of two parks which today have unfortunately disappeared—Hohenheim, built by the Duke of Württemberg, and Carlsberg, the work of the mad duke Christian IV of Zweibrücken.

To judge from all the palaces and gardens still in existence today, Germany seems to have been an artistic prolongation of France. Despite inevitable futilities, the luxury and refinement of the German courts was far from being mere clumsy mimicry. Paul de Saint-Victor in his jewelled prose very justly remarks.

On visiting these residences, one might be wandering through some enchanted palace of Asia where creatures have been placed under a spell by a magician and languish beneath the lifeless shroud of a still-life. The figures on the tapestries give mysterious signs, sofas speak like that of the younger Crébillon, the statues breathe, the Venetian mirrors reflect in their dulled glass pale faces which stare fixedly at you. A fantastic life fills these abandoned castles with its groans. Memories whisper there, echoes gossip and spectres glide. History passes with a

<sup>1</sup> Prince de Ligne *Coup d'œil sur Belœil*

## THE PALACES AND THEIR ARCHITECTS

finger to her lips These bizarre edifices were built in the image of the potentates who dwelt in them, insensate petty kings, *princes fainéants*, dissolute bishops, puppet despots who threw out of the window money they never possessed <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> P de Saint-Victor *Barbares et Bandits*

## Court Life in the Palaces



In these magnificent German palaces created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and entirely appointed in the French manner (wittily described by Voltaine as 'old castles where one seeks amusement'), the princes tried to re-create French life with its gaudy splendours and its charming seductions. Everywhere there was an attempt to copy the life at Versailles by giving fetes which swallowed up a year's revenue in a single evening. For a single one of these Karl-Theodor of the Palatinate did not hesitate to spend 100,000 florins, and Karl-Eugen of Wurttemberg 300,000-400,000<sup>1</sup>

As a general rule there was no conversation at these courts. There was little mention of foreign policies, a subject too vast for anyone to understand, at the most there would be an occasional exchange of opinions on minor matters of local interest. One discussed the love affairs of the prince, the opera, a new actor, or the fete to be given on the approaching visit of some official.

The evening pastimes were gambling—the stakes were sometimes very high<sup>2</sup>—and dancing. The ordinary balls were hardly more than rather dreary gatherings. Usually the dances were slow, and the more lively ones which came from Italy did not penetrate further than the south of Germany. The polonaise was merely a sedate walk holding hands round the supper table, the

<sup>1</sup> There were also economical courts. Frederick II's budget for fetes did not exceed 100,000 florins a year.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Wortley-Montagu saw women in Vienna lose 20,000-30,000 florins in an evening, and remarked that one of the best ways for a rich bourgeois to gain admission to court was to be prepared to lose large sums of money at gambling.

allemande, judging from the numerous pieces of music composed by J S Bach as an accompaniment, does not appear to have been very lively. Then came the dances imported from France the minuet, gavotte, pavane, bourrée, passe-pied. The Duchess of Orléans was indignant at seeing the old national dances of her country neglected. 'Do they no longer dance German dances in Germany?' she asked. 'Are they looked down upon? I see nothing foolish in gaiety. The only folly is to be sad. It makes you ill, and serves no useful purpose. I have no love for the French dances. An eternal minuet I find unbearable.'<sup>1</sup> The waltz only appeared in Strasbourg in 1760, and one of its most enthusiastic supporters was none other than the young Goethe. This dance soon became very fashionable, in Wurttemberg people at court had to be able to waltz.

Masked routs were an immense success throughout Germany. Gaiety was given free rein and the excitement of fancy dress, sometimes unexpected, was a source of stimulation. Count Lehn-dorf tells of a ball where the Bishop of Breslau was very comical disguised as a woman. Princess Amelia of Prussia gave a soirée where the men had to wear women's dresses and the women to appear in male costume.

Other pleasures were more typically German. The birthdays of the princes were celebrated with particular pomp. On such occasions the little capital was in a turmoil, the people who were lucky enough to bear the same christian name as His Highness sharing the honours of the feast. Crosses and titles were handed out to members of the court. The military parade was of unaccustomed splendour. In the evening there was a gala performance at the theatre, and the day ended with an interminable banquet to which numerous foreign guests were invited and which all the local nobility attended to pay their respects to the sovereign. The women donned everything they possessed in the way of jewellery, wore dresses with long trains, and rouged their cheeks. The servants' liveries were renewed for the occasion.<sup>2</sup>

Another type of pleasure rarely met with outside Germany was

<sup>1</sup> Letter of March 1706

<sup>2</sup> Abbé Libert *Voyage sur les bords du Rhin*

the *Wirtschaft*, a kind of fair given in artificially rustic surroundings. The prince, disguised as an innkeeper, received his guests, garbed as peasants. By drawing lots each was given a role to fill, and the most elegant cavalier at court could be transformed into a cut-throat or a barber.<sup>1</sup> Leibniz, in a letter dated 13th July 1700, to the Electress Sophia, describes a *Wirtschaft* 'given at Charlottenburg, where the whole of society in village attire were summoned to the *Gasthaus zur Kopfsloser Frau*, where the buyers crowded round booths filled with edibles and elegant trifles'.

Very German, too, were the spectacles where the princes liked to see wild animals tearing each other to pieces. A Frankfort newspaper of 1727 advertises a choice entertainment in an enclosure where bears would devour donkeys. In Vienna the entrance card to one of these bloody butcheries, which in cruelty surpassed bull-fighting, has on the back of the programme 'Today, by permission of the Emperor, the following performance will be given in the Grand Amphitheatre at 5 o'clock precisely. A wild Hungarian bull whose tail and ears are decked with squibs will be attacked by bloodhounds. A wild boar and then a large bear will be attacked by hounds. A savage wolf will be chased by speedy hounds. Then a bear will be attacked by mastiffs . . . There will be a fine African tiger on display, another bear will give combat to a young wild bull, which will be devoured on the spot, if the bear does not succeed he will be helped by a wolf, etc.' Mauvillon reports a fight between six bears and bisons which took place in Berlin in 1751. 'The king killed the surviving bisons with his arquebus after which new bears were brought into the arena and dogs unleashed against them.'<sup>2</sup>

The pleasures of the table held a prominent place at the German courts, and the chronicles describe in great detail the feasts,

<sup>1</sup> For this type of masked ball, 'all those who had the same lodgings, having decided to disguise themselves, were presented with tickets on which were written as many different professions as there were to be people at the feast. Often the meanest, as well as the most agreeable, were chosen. After drawing lots for the tickets each person dressed himself according to the profession chosen. One day the Queen of Denmark was forced to play the role of a female cut-purse while the Prince of Denmark was disguised as a barber' (Moreri *Dictionnaire*).

<sup>2</sup> Mauvillon *Histoire du roi Frédéric-Guillaume de Prusse*



the number of dishes served and the luxury of the plate displayed.<sup>1</sup> Although in the eighteenth century a few courts were renowned for their exceptional frugality,<sup>2</sup> the majority of them indulged in orgies at which the thin veneer which disguised German barbarity quickly disappeared. Gluttony was rife. The men did not eat, they guzzled like pigs. During meals which lasted half the day—meals at which the prince set the example of being a good trencher man—the music of flutes and viols and fanfares of trumpets and horns furnished noisy interludes. The quantity of the dishes usually made up for their quality, and Montesquieu observes ‘The Germans drink and eat practically anything with pleasure. Their main object is to swallow instead of to taste.’ Every French traveller was surprised at the nature of the meats served at the princely table. M. de Coulanges complained that at the Duke of Wurttemberg’s court he was given only ‘black, lean, dry, cured meat, according to the fashion of the country, and a number of extraordinary stews, such as goslings stuffed with fried potatoes and prunes, chickens seasoned with cloves and the most revolting pâtés in the world’.

In Germany only very strongly spiced dishes were appreciated, they were garnished with piquant sauces unsuited to delicate palates or weak stomachs. This may account for the number of princes who suffered from gout or succumbed to apoplexy. To

<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth century there existed four services of gold, the first was presented in 1760 by the Emperor Francis I to the King of Prussia, the second formed part of the Bavarian Treasure, the third was presented in 1868 by the City of Amsterdam to George V, father of the first King of the Belgians, the fourth was the property of the Dukes of Newcastle. Louis XV was content to possess forty-two gold plates (Barbier *Journal*, September 1759.)

<sup>2</sup> The household expenses of the King of Prussia (Friedrich-Wilhelm) hardly exceeded 1300 crowns a month. At his table were usually to be found the Royal Family and a few generals. They nearly died of starvation. Only one dish was served, it was passed round the table, and there was often little left when it came to the last guest (Montesquieu *Voyages*). Sophia Wilhelmina, daughter of the same King of Prussia, maintains in her memoirs that at the court of Berlin she often had to be content with ‘a smell of the dishes’. In 1782 M. de Lynar complained that at the Elector of Bavaria’s residence the table was ‘very poor in dishes, which were usually cold’.

## GERMANY AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

appreciate the difference between German and French food one only has to read the correspondence of the Princess Palatine, who could never get accustomed to the menus in her adopted country. It was she who launched the fashion in Paris for raw ham and blood sausage.

'We eat here,' she writes, 'many of our German dishes, such as sauerkraut and sweet cabbage . . . People hardly ate game before I made it fashionable. The same applies to pickled herrings. My German chaps enjoy German dishes so much that I can never bear to eat a single French ragoût . . . I eat nothing but beef, roast veal, and occasionally mutton, partridges and roast chicken, but never pheasant. For supper I confine myself to milk soup, beer and wine. I hate broth, for it makes me ill. Blood sausage and ham are good for my stomach. I loathe coffee, chocolate or tea, and cannot understand why people rave about them. A copious dish of sauerkraut and smoked sausage is for me a dish fit for a king, and I can think of nothing better.'<sup>1</sup>

One gradually begins to realize in Germany, says Caraccioli, that Europe owes to the French 'the inestimable honour of no longer drowning one's reason in wine, and the advantage of eating with delicacy'. A few of the more refined princes even became gourmets and arbiters of gastronomy. From manuals sent from Paris they learnt the art of eating well and became adepts in the ceremonial of this art, learning how to decorate a table, to use fine napery,<sup>2</sup> epeignes, candlesticks, forks and spoons. But the two last were rarely used in Germany.<sup>3</sup>

The age of great drinking bouts was replaced by that of spark-

<sup>1</sup> Letters of 22nd November 1714, 28th October 1717 and October 1719.

<sup>2</sup> In Vienna the guests were given napkins, but it was not considered good form to use them.

<sup>3</sup> The Princess Palatine writes on the 22nd January 1713 'At table I have never used anything except my knife and my fingers'. Spoons and forks only began to be used in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century. The reason they were used in Hamburg from 1780 onwards is because that city was near Hanover, where English customs penetrated once the ruler became King of England.

ling champagne, goose's liver from Strasbourg and delicacies which have earned for France the gratitude of every gourmet in the world.

Drunkenness was a thoroughly German vice. Voltaire, with slight exaggeration, maintains that 'When one hears the order "bring something to drink" one knows that one is in Germany' Drinking in fact became a profession, was even considered as a kind of social obligation, and the court had to possess intrepid drinkers capable of holding their own with the prince<sup>1</sup> Drunkenness was no disgrace Very much to the contrary Anyone who could manage to empty his glass at one draught 'in the Palatine manner' acquired an enviable reputation German museums have preserved specimens of glasses with the capacity of a half-bottle, rounded at the base so that they could not be set down until emptied to the last drop They served to drink to the health of the living, 'and even the dead, for at the end of the orgy no one knew what he was saying' (Caiacchioli) The drinking and smoking sessions, known as *Tabagies*, organized by King Friedrich-Wilhelm of Prussia, have remained famous The Margrave Georg-Friedrich of Bayreuth, father-in-law of Sophia-Wilhelmina, got drunk three times a day At Nymphenburg, during a dinner given by the Elector of Bavaria, the guests broke all the crockery On the occasion of the consecration of the Marienkirche in Munich 200 thalers' worth of glass was smashed Augustus the Strong, Elector of Saxony, together with Friedrich-Wilhelm I of Prussia, founded an anti-sobriety league, his two nephews died from excessive drinking and the same fate overtook one of the Princess Palatine's brothers at the age of thirty-two On receiving news of his death Liselotte wrote 'If he had not loved wine so much he would have been a perfect philosopher . . . He could not live without drinking He burned out his body'

One can imagine the surprise of the French when after some ceremonial feast they saw the guests rolling, dead drunk, under

<sup>1</sup> No one ever dreamed of reproaching the princesses and their ladies-in-waiting for sacrificing to Bacchus, smoking or taking snuff At the Court of Weimar, one of the most orderly in the period, the Duchess Anna Amalia used her snuffbox in public

the table. The Duc de Gramont describes the dinner given for himself and the Electors of Mainz and Cologne by Count Egon Furstenberg 'The dinner lasted from midday until nine o'clock in the evening, to the deafening sound of trumpets and cymbals Two or three thousand toasts were drunk. The table was buttressed up and all the Electors danced on it, led by the Hofmarschall, who had a wooden leg All the guests were intoxicated'<sup>1</sup>

On returning from a hunt M de Coulanges, who would have preferred to retire to bed, found himself forced to accept an invitation to supper with the Duke of Wurtemberg

'The Duke,' writes the guest, 'began by drinking the health of the King of France, followed by all the powers on earth I asked for some water to dilute my wine a little, since the pace was too hot Despite my insistence I was told that water was never brought into the dining-hall of so great a prince as the Duke of Wurtemberg I had to make the best of things and to drink alternately white wine and claret, then both mixed, then two glasses at a time and sometimes three according to the whim of the prince We were four or five hours at table and we never stopped drinking The princes drank drink for drink with us, and as soon as one of the company collapsed he was lifted up by four people and carried out of the hall It was wonderful to see the protestations of friendship exchanged between the Duke and ourselves He embraced us closely and we addressed him with familiarity as though we had known each other all our lives But at last, since it is difficult to go on drinking for ever, we were carried out of the room one after the other and thrown into the Duke's carriage, which was waiting at the bottom of the staircase It relayed us in four journeys to our hotel'

M de Coulanges left the morning after this drinking bout 'quite bemused by the previous evening'

It must be noted that at the ecclesiastical courts the passion for drinking reached its peak<sup>2</sup> Pollnitz speaks of the terrible ordeals

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of Marshal de Gramont, vol 2

<sup>2</sup> By a strange coincidence the territories of these courts produced the best vintages in Germany

to which he was subjected by the Bishop of Wurzburg and the Abbot of Fulda Lord Chesterfield, travelling in Germany, took part in several drinking bouts in Mainz and Trier where 'one might have been at the court of a vandal king'. The Prince Archbishop of Munster emptied his goblet at one draught at each meal and forced his guests to drink to the dregs from a big silver church bell whose clapper he had removed. The bell had to be turned upside-down to prove that there was no cheating. Foreign visitors invited to these bacchanalian orgies spoke of them as though they were shipwrecked mariners who had escaped from a tempest.

Nearly all the German princes of the eighteenth century were passionately devoted to hunting.<sup>1</sup> The women too shared this passion, and one can find princesses, for example Amelia of Bavaria and Caroline of Hesse, who were so enamoured of the sport that they had themselves painted in hunting costume wearing three-cornered braided hats. Prelates were occasionally inveterate hunters, and in certain portraits we find them wearing a garb which entirely conceals their ecclesiastical character.

<sup>1</sup> A few of them however resisted. Frederick II, without in principle condemning a sport which gave the sovereign an opportunity for outdoor exercise, was rather severe on hunting. 'This almost universal passion,' he said, 'of nobles, great lords and kings—particularly in Germany—is one of those sensual pleasures which exercise the body and do not appeal to the mind. It is merely the ardent desire to pursue some animal and the cruel satisfaction of killing it. It is an amusement which makes the body robust and leaves the mind untilled and lacking in culture. It is excusable for princes to go hunting, provided they do so only rarely to distract them from their serious and sometimes melancholy occupations. I am told that hunting is the noblest and most ancient of all men's pleasures, it is good for the health, it has been proved that hunters make old bones, that it is an innocent pleasure suited to great lords, since it displays their magnificence, banishes their sorrows and in times of peace keeps the images of war before their eyes. But it is rather to kill time and banish boredom that people have always hunted. Of all the amusements hunting is the one that least suits princes, they can display their magnificence in a hundred ways more useful to their subjects, and if the abundance of game ruins the country folk, the task of destroying these beasts could very well be given to huntsmen paid exclusively for that purpose' (*Anti-Machiavel*).

## GERMANY AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

In Germany there were four methods used to kill game—hunting on horseback, hunting with beaters, hunting with pointers, and falconry.

The chase on horseback, a French importation based entirely on that practised by Louis XIV with its panoply of uniforms and fanfares, valets, huntsmen and packs of hounds, was a prerogative of sovereigns.

The hunt with beaters, on the other hand, assumed a completely Germanic form. The day was prepared three or four weeks ahead. A contemporary has described it for us 'Thousands of local peasants were armed with sticks and regimented with incomparable harshness to beat the game for the prince. The hunting ground sometimes covered several square leagues, more or less forming a game park in which were animals in their thousands. The game, driven down corridors of nets, was thus brought into a lake where the prince's guests stood within gunshot. It was a pitiful spectacle to see the hunters firing on these animals herded into a lake where they had to face human beings of unparalleled ferocity.'

M de Coulanges, on his return from a hunt given by the Duke of Wurtemberg, jotted down in his diary 'When we arrived at our destination we found great "toils" containing a vast quantity of boars which had been driven there some days before. Among these toils, hidden in little canvas shelters, at various points, were posted four or five men armed with pikes. We foreigners, who were unfamiliar with this kind of hunting, climbed into wagons brought for the purpose from which we could watch the pleasures of the hunt without danger.'

Most of the French who witnessed one of these bloody massacres expressed their disgust at such a sight. On the other hand, these hecatombs from which all skill was eliminated and where butchery was the sole pleasure delighted the German princes. Some of them 'gauged their power by the number of stags they possessed. One would boast of 500, while another would say "I have 2,000."'<sup>1</sup> Duke Karl-Eugen of Wurtemberg boasted of having killed 6,500 stags and 5,000 boars in 1737.<sup>2</sup> The Margrave

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu *Voyages*

<sup>2</sup> Perthes, *op cit*

of Ansbach, a practical man, was delighted to accept 40,000 florins a year for the sale of his game

Hunting with pointers was only enjoyed by a limited number of princes. Finally, falconry, more costly apparently than any other form of hunting, was practised only by the wealthiest princes. It entailed the purchase of birds which usually came from Iceland, a staff of specialists, and heronries to provide prey for the falcons.

Hunting was the exclusive right of the sovereign and game was sacrosanct. Woe to the peasant rash enough to catch the hare which was eating the cabbages in his garden. A regiment of gamekeepers was there to prosecute this crime of *lèse-majesté*. The prince's men were also allowed to shoot any dog roaming at liberty and to inflict a fine on its owner. In 1702 to kill a stag in Prussia made the culprit liable to a fine of 500 thalers, an enormous sum for that time. Merely to fire a gun, even into the air, was punishable. The severest penalties were prescribed for poaching, ranging from a year in the galleys to life imprisonment for a second offence. To kill a poacher was not a crime but an act to be encouraged and rewarded. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century a poacher caught red-handed ran the risk of being tied to the horns of a stag which, when released, quickly gored the delinquent to death.

The main objective of a sovereign was to increase the head of game on his land. It is easy to imagine the damage caused to the crops by these animals—damage which, incidentally, carried no rights of compensation.<sup>1</sup> To protect their harvest the peasants shouted all night at the tops of their voices and banged pots with their sticks. A traveller crossing Ansbach territory was surprised to hear this appalling din in open country. On inquiring the reason for it he discovered that the country folk, being forbidden to use weapons or to release their dogs, protected themselves against the depredations of the prince's boars by making as much noise as possible. However, he adds, despite these precautions the animals often broke through the fences.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The damage caused to the lands of 200 villages in the Principality of Ansbach in 1735 was estimated at 150,000 florins. Saxony in particular was laid waste by wild boars.

<sup>2</sup> Biedermann *L'Allemagne au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*

It was not until 1790 that the peasants were freed from this slavery. At that time many of the princes authorized their subjects to shoot the game from which they had suffered so long. The people participated frenziedly in its destruction.

Among the most enjoyable distractions at the German court a prominent place must be given to the theatre. It is not surprising in a country where music—good or bad—was a natural need (many of the princes themselves were able performers and Frederick II's flute has become famous)<sup>1</sup> that the opera was held in such repute. The opera, in fact, had many advantages: it allowed the works of famous composers and famous singers to be heard and gave opportunities for sumptuous performances and, above all, for staging ballets. Among the princes, Augustus the Strong was one of those for whom the theatre swallowed the greatest sums—the staging of an opera in Dresden cost him as much as 60,000 florins. Karl-Eugen of Wurtemberg was a close second, paying Vestris the fabulous salary, for that period, of 12,000 florins for six months as leading dancer at Stuttgart. The princes rivalled each other in diplomacy to secure the best singers, castrati, dancers, musicians, librettists and directors.

As for the spoken theatre, in addition to the amateur company, which we shall see was passionately cultivated at a number of courts (the Palatinate, Zweibrücken, Bayreuth, Ansbach and particularly Weimar), each prince felt obliged to maintain a troupe of professional Italian and French actors.

Until the beginning of the eighteenth century the performances had very little connection with what we today call 'theatre'.

'The current repertory', writes a contemporary, Bielfeld, 'is composed of strange, interminable plays where mythological heroes and characters of contemporary history banter with harlequin. In a play called *Adam and Eve or the Fall of the First Man*, given at Strasbourg, a fat Eve, in flesh-coloured tights

<sup>1</sup> Herr von Stein remarked that 'nearly all the princes have a taste for music and play themselves' (Montesquieu *Voyages*).



and a guddle of fig leaves, displayed a highly unpleasant nudity Adam was ticked out in the same way God the Father appeared in an old dressing-gown, wearing a gigantic wig and a long white beard Nothing but despairing lovers, parricides, highwaymen, ministers and mistresses, gallants whose pockets were filled with daggers and poisons, melancholics and madmen of all kinds, incendiaries and gravediggers In more than twenty plays the principal characters were madmen There are plays where the leading character kills fifteen to twenty persons in succession, and as a grand climax plunges a dagger into his breast Several actors and actresses complained to me that they could no longer find any new ways of dying on the stage In certain scenes the leading actors have to remain for at least half an hour in their death throes, uttering their lines, interrupted with convulsions I have often seen five or six people dying on stage at the same time The audience itself seems ready to die of joy if the game goes on for some time, and loudly applauds each convulsive movement The Germans know nothing of elegant life and go to the theatre in quest of strong emotions, requiring no finesse in the play <sup>1</sup>

Frederick II was no less critical of the German theatre of his day 'Our stage,' he writes, 'has been abandoned to foul-mouthed clowns or to bad jesters who put on plays totally lacking in genius' <sup>2</sup> The same severity will be found in a Frenchman, the Marquis d'Argens, who spent some part of his life in Germany. 'The imagination is sullied by the pallid jokes of their clowns', and one went, 'over-heated with wine, to join the people in admiring these monstrous tragedies The most passable are the Spanish or Italian comedies, badly translated and even worse adapted to the character of the German harlequins, who, bearing the name of Hanswurst, are the heroes of the plays and the leaders of the troupes' <sup>3</sup> The playwrights, not being aristocrats, can only be

<sup>1</sup> Bielfeld *Progrès des Allemands dans les sciences*

<sup>2</sup> *Histoire de mon temps*

<sup>3</sup> 'The buffoon, or fool, of the true German comedy was known as Jack Pudding or "Hanswurst" He was a kind of oaf In order to be perfect in his role he had to affect a Salzburg accent He was coarse in the extreme

familiar with the customs and stupidities of their fellows, which means that all good breeding is absent.' And d'Argens goes on to suggest another reason for this mediocrity in the German theatre 'The German character varies very much in the different provinces. The Austrians bear no resemblance to the Saxons, nor the Swabians to the Brandenburgers, nor the Hessians to the Westphalians. This means that the playwright who has successfully ridiculed the Saxons interests no one in Austria, etc. Molière, having the great advantage of knowing the court and the city, portrayed characters of general interest to the whole country and to every nation.'<sup>1</sup>

Frederick II is just as severe on the English theatre when he writes

'To convince you of the lack of taste which still reigns in Germany, you have only to visit a public performance. You will see abominable plays by Shakespeare translated into our language, and the whole audience swooning as they listen to these ridiculous farces, worthy only of the savages in Canada. I describe them in this way because they violate every rule of the theatre. One can forgive Shakespeare these strange aberrations, for the birth of an art is never its point of maturity. But now when a Götze von Berlichingen [Goethe] appears on the scene, an odious imitation of these bad English plays, the audience applauds and demands an encore for these disgusting fantasies. I know of course that there is no accounting for tastes.'<sup>2</sup>

One can easily understand the success achieved by the French theatre when it arrived in Germany, particularly when it was interpreted by Parisian actors. The German princes, in common with high society, all spoke or at least understood French. Accustomed to consider the German theatre quite detestable, their

In comparison with him the French Polichinelle was a very polished gentleman' (Bielfeld, *op. cit.*) 'Hanswurst', the personification of stupidity, coarseness and immorality in the German theatre, at last fell from grace and his effigy was burned in the public square at Leipzig in October 1737.

<sup>1</sup> D'Argens, *Histoire de l'esprit humain*

<sup>2</sup> Frederick II. *De la littérature allemande* (1780)

main ambition was to have a French company at their court. From then onwards Racine, Corneille, Molière, Voltaire and all the French classics were the rage on the other side of the Rhine. The plays were given either in French or in a German adaptation, and somewhat freely and artistically at that. An Englishman, Moore, wrote during his journey in 1774 'The majority of the plays given in the German theatres are translations from the English or the French. Germany, so rich in theologians, jurists, doctors and chemists, has so far produced few poets. This seems to be changing.' The situation did actually change in about 1760, and d'Argens was soon able to write 'The Germans are beginning to write good plays on the model of Molière. Their theatre which, in the old days, suffered so much from the licence of bad Italian comedy, has become the school of wisdom. The comedies of Baron von Bulach are full of wit; Frau Gottsched the wife of the famous man of letters, is a dramatic playwright.' The plays of Lessing and later the tragedies of Schlegel were well received. In 1779 the German National Theatre was built in Mannheim. With the appearance of Goethe and Schiller, a new era began for the German stage.

# The Middle Classes



Until the end of the seventeenth century, the majority of German towns were still experiencing the effects of the Thirty Years War. Before this period no one even thought of building, modernizing or developing a few large centres (Dresden was rebuilt by Augustus the Strong in 1704, Mannheim by the Elector Karl-Philip of the Palatinate in 1720). It is easy to imagine the primitive state in which the capitals of the princelings remained from the surprise evinced by travellers even in wealthy cities such as Berlin, Hamburg or Frankfurt, with their broad streets fringed with palaces and fine houses. 'In every small town with a *Residenz*,' writes Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, 'a sort of shabby finery, a number of dirty people of quality tawdered out, narrow nasty streets out of repair, wretchedly thin of inhabitants, and above half of the common sort asking alms.' And she cannot refrain from exclaiming 'How different from England!'

These towns were really no more than large villages. The streets were only paved very gradually,<sup>1</sup> and pavements were unknown, so that in Potsdam, unless one possessed a carriage one could only escape being splashed with mud by wearing stilts. Not until the first few years of the eighteenth century did the old wooden houses—a universal feature—begin to be numbered according to a fashion recently imported from France. Street lighting remained sporadic for a long time. Street lamps were introduced in Leipzig

<sup>1</sup> While the streets of Berlin began to be paved in 1688, those in Weimar were not yet completed in 1775.

in 1702, in Dresden in 1705, in Cassel in 1755,<sup>1</sup> and not until 1781 in Nuremberg, Augsburg and Ulm. As a general rule towns were only lit in the vicinity of the palace and then only between September and April.

Inside the houses no luxury had yet appeared.<sup>2</sup> The rooms were not parqu岸ted and the floors were covered with coarse planks or sprinkled with fine sand. The Duchess of Orléans, that ruthless critic of all things French, wrote 'Wishing to go to the second study in a hurry, part of the flooring broke beneath my feet. I do not know what they call parquet in German. At home I never saw anything else in my life except slats and boards.'<sup>3</sup>

In Germany, with its immense forests, it would be reasonable to expect that fireplaces were in current usage. They were, however, only to be found in the houses of the well-to-do. 'The Germans', writes Jordan,<sup>4</sup> 'usually have a single fireplace in their houses, in the kitchen, which they do not use because they have stoves which warm the living-rooms.' Even in elegant circles the interior lighting of the apartments long remained rudimentary. Lord Malmesbury reports that in 1767 a single candle lit his bedroom in the Residenz where he was staying. The guests at a court gala waited in semi-darkness until the appearance of the prince gave the signal for the chandeliers to be lit.

Linen was scarce and far from luxurious, to judge by the very modest trousseaux which petty sovereigns gave their children. The Elector Palatine provided his daughter, Elizabeth Charlotte, on her departure for Paris where she was to marry the Duke of Orléans, with six day and six night chemises. The Duke of Anhalt-Zerbst was no more generous to his daughter on her betrothal to Tsar Paul, she was eventually to become Catherine the Great. Prince Kevenhüller speaks of the Grand Duchess Josepha of

<sup>1</sup> In the case of night alarms the inhabitants of Cassel were advised to put lamps in their windows to help travellers find their way and the police to pursue the malefactors.

<sup>2</sup> As witness to this, cf. Collin: *Lettres sur les Allemands*.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of November 1710.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Stefan Jordan (Berlin, 1700-45), whose family originated from the Dauphiné, became the favourite and confidant of Frederick II, who in 1740 appointed him Privy Councillor, member of the Prussian academies and in 1744 vice-president of the Berlin Academy.

Austria who, while possessing ninety silk dresses, 'had very little linen, of the most ordinary kind and threadbare into the bargain'.

The cares of the *toilette* did not seem to bother the princes any more than it bothered the middle classes. They seldom washed. The Margravine of Bayreuth, in her memoirs, records that her sister-in-law, the wife of Frederick II, 'smelt terribly strong' Lord Malmesbury, who was charged to accompany the young Princess of Brunswick to England on her betrothal to the Prince of Wales, remarks, with a surprise quite natural to an Englishman that his travelling companion 'neglected her *toilette* to such an extent that she offended the nostrils by this negligence' Prince Kaunitz aroused surprise and admiration by exhibiting a tooth-brush which he proceeded to use at table in front of all the guests Charlotte von Kalb, the mistress of Schiller, made fun of a student who cleaned his nails

Baths were rare in Germany,<sup>1</sup> except in certain princely residences. We shall have occasion to describe some of these magnificent bathrooms later (Badenburg, in the gardens of Nymphenburg, the summer residence of the Elector of Bavaria, Bruchsal of the Bishop of Speyer, the baths of Cassel, those of the Landgrave of Hesse, etc.). Lady Wortley-Montagu refers to the filth which was to be found everywhere in Germany, even in the royal houses where an attempt was made to disguise it under a veneer of opulence. She was not surprised that the lack of hygiene caused frequent epidemics

To combat disease they had recourse to ignoramuses who were doctors in name only and to barber-surgeons (Collini) Good practitioners, such as Dr Cothemus, Frederick II's doctor, who was consulted by the Margrave of Bayreuth, were rare—so rare in fact that when Augustus the Strong had to have a toe amputated he thought of sending to Paris for a surgeon The ignorance in the treatment of disease was appalling,<sup>2</sup> vaccination was unknown,

<sup>1</sup> The Duchess of Orleans often voiced her dislike of baths

<sup>2</sup> Montesquieu and his valet, who travelled through Bavaria in 1728, were laid low with a fever The author notes in his *Journal de Voyage* 'The doctors of this country ask no questions They prescribe nothing in the way of drink and food but simply order you to take their pills If you ask them they feel your pulse He [the doctor] gave my valet an

cancer was thought to be an animal whose appetite had to be sated with raw meat. In cases of madness a man was advised to follow a procession and to put himself in the hands of God for a cure. Quackery reigned supreme. In 1777, when the Elector of Bavaria caught smallpox, his doctor, having exhausted the arsenal of drugs at his disposal, made him swallow a small image of the Virgin, a remedy which gave the *coup de grâce* to the invalid. Widespread superstition made the sick resort to diviners, talismans, philtres, magic incantations and amulets. Fortunes were read in coffee grounds. 'There is no limit to their credulity—omens, prophecies, nature cures, animal magnetism, necromancy—everything is an article of belief.'<sup>1</sup>

The Gravenitz, mistress of the Duke of Württemberg, and the Neitschutz, mistress of Johann-Georg IV of Saxony, were accused of having killed their husbands by witchcraft. A seventy-year-old witch, Maria Singer, was burnt at Würzburg in 1749. Long after this it was a popular belief that in the deepest forest of the Harz, at the top of the Bloxberg, the witches gathered to celebrate their sabbath.

In France during the period of which we are writing Paris was the centre of attraction for the whole nation, outside the capital were only what were called the provinces. It was entirely different in Germany, where one could expect to find neither a capital nor a feeling of being in the provinces. The country abounded in small centres which produced a variety of essays in intellectual development. Schiller, in one of his quatrains, recognizes that 'nowhere does art blossom like a flower at the behest of a prince'. Doubtless this decentralization was harmful to the unity of the

emetic and myself ipecacuanha. This was because German bodies, full of beer and ham, need to be purged. Moreover they prescribe no diet, a moderate use of wine, and they do not ask you when you ate last and what you ate. This is because they would earn no fees by telling the Germans to stop eating.'

<sup>1</sup> Collini. The Duchess of Orléans, recalling the practice of sorcery in her country and learning of the language into which her nephew, the Duc de Berry, had fallen, suspected Mme de Craon, his mistress, of bewitching him with a nutmeg to ensure his love.

## GERMANY AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

German nation; on the other hand it had the advantage of multiplying the centres of culture.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, according to Montesquieu, the inhabitants of the towns were 'good folk' who, at first sight, seemed 'wild and proud' but who were to be compared 'with elephants which at first appear terrible but grow gentle when they are stroked. You flatter them, pat them on the trunk and then climb on their backs'. The Germans retained an instinctive attachment to their old simple peaceful customs. According to Collini they were 'slow and phlegmatic', to hear them you would think that they 'were deliberating today what they have to do tomorrow'. A German humorist, Borne, maintained that his companions exaggerated their love of method to the point of studying chemistry before removing a stain from their clothing.

The Germans invested all their actions with a ponderous clumsiness and a lack of elegance which civilization and contact with other nations never managed to modify. Frederick II's opinion of his compatriots was 'They are laborious and profound. When once they get hold of a subject they dwell on it, their books are tediously confused. Could one cure them of their heaviness and instil a little more grace into them I should not despair of my nation producing some great men.'<sup>2</sup> He also maintained that 'the Germans are completely lacking in matters of taste, they effect a vicious mixture of Roman, English, French and Teuton. They still lack that discernment which knows how to distinguish the mediocre from the sublime.'

It is incredibly difficult to give a true overall impression of a society so full of contrast, where such a mixture of grossness and

<sup>1</sup> Goethe in the presence of Duke Karl-August of Saxe-Weimar once commented upon a passage from Julius Moser's *Patriotische Phantasien* where the author develops a theme which can be summed up as follows: the splitting of Germany into small principalities undoubtedly had one great disadvantage: it condemned the country to a certain political incapacity. On the other hand this was offset by a cultural advantage: each small principality could become a civilizing centre thus favouring development of the arts. Goethe had no difficulty in winning the Duke over to this opinion.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Frederick II to Voltaire, dated 26th July 1737.



## THE MIDDLE CLASSES

cultured intellect, ideology and materialism, childish piety and immorality, coarseness and sentimentality were to be met with. In general a meticulous economy reigned which, according to Mauvillon, bordered on avarice. Moreover, nowhere in Europe could one live in more favourable circumstances than in Germany, where the cheapness of rents and servants' wages defied all competition. Food cost virtually nothing.

The Germans were great eaters.<sup>1</sup> Their meals, which cost so little, were for them one of the main occupations of the day. Casanova states that in Germany 'the only sensuality to be found is at their feasts'. The abundance of the dishes made up for their quality. 'When a German invites you to dinner,' writes Mauvillon, 'he will regale you on insipid stews and soups which taste like hot water. According to him nothing is better for the health. The ingredients used by French cooks are never to his taste because they ruin the stomach. You will know better, my friend, and realize that their only fault is that they cost money. When your host makes you drink Rhine wine, which is sour and disgusting, he maintains that it is because it is healthier than French wine. He will insist that the wines of Champagne and Burgundy heat the blood.'

But middle-class houses knew nothing of luxury. The furnishings were plain, mahogany did not appear until the beginning of the nineteenth century, comfortable armchairs were unknown, and if there happened to be one in the drawing-room, it was reserved for the oldest member of the family. The chairs were upholstered in coarse material. Mirrors and carpets were rare, and the table was laid without pretension. The table-ware was usually pottery or pewter. Silver plate was considered princely. Until the beginning of the eighteenth century the arts of serving and carving, the routine and etiquette of the meal, were non-existent. Only gradually did it become the fashion to eat decently *à la française*, to use a fork—a custom which met with great opposi-

<sup>1</sup> Gluttony even penetrated to the monasteries, where material cares often seem to have outweighed intellectual activity. Caraccioli mentions the superior of a community who, to counter the pillage of the larder by his monks, transported the victuals into the library, doubtless the least-frequented room in the monastery.

tion—and a napkin, which allowed them to wipe their knives on something besides their fingers or on their cuffs.

But the habit of drinking to excess persisted. For fear of being accused of degeneracy, children were forced by their parents to gulp down large goblets of beer or wine like persons of quality. At Wetzlar the doctors of literature and of law were as proficient in the art of drinking as they were qualified to discuss the most difficult text or to plead at the bar. Beer-drinking bouts were above all prevalent in student circles, where they have persisted down to our times as a veritable necessity. Wurttemberg in particular has remained famous for the amount of drink absorbed by its inhabitants. 'No one,' says Keyser, 'could compete with the Privy Councillor of this country who was accustomed to drink ten quarts of Burgundy a day. Four or five of his colleagues could keep pace with him.' It was the feat of who could show the maximum endurance in drinking during the course of a banquet which terrified the unfortunate foreigners who were called upon to participate.

'At the end of the meal,' wrote Mauvillon, 'you are brought one of those murderous goblets about a foot deep and four inches broad. It has a bell-shaped lid. To open, fill and empty it are one and the same thing. This is done with amazing agility. The highest dignitary present starts. He only stops to hand the lid to the man on his right and to propose a toast to whoever he thinks fit. This man hands the lid to a third, receives the glass from the first, fills and empties it, followed at once by number three . . . To refuse to drink one of these healths is a crime of *bacchic lèse-majesté* punishable by insults and possibly blows.

'I remember one day being present at one of these feasts, already a trifle bemused by the wine I had drunk in ordinary glasses to the health of those present. I thought that I should soon be able to slip away because we were at the dessert. Then suddenly I saw the treacherous goblet brought in, and shivered with fright. The health of the reigning prince was proposed, followed by that of the princess his wife, his two sisters and three brothers, not all at once but one after the other. I was at the end of my endurance and yet there was no chance of holding

back. To refuse to drink to the royal family would have meant being treated as a seditious criminal. Next we had to drink to the health of the chief minister, the Hofmarschall and all down the line to the prince's butler. I thought that we should finally be drinking to the scullions had the health of the maître-d'hôtel not been followed by the collapse of three or four champions. They fell under the table.

'Unfortunately I was one of them. No one paid the slightest attention to me. There remained six contestants who, having drunk all these healths, went on to toast the generals and the leading officers of the army. I learned all this the following day from my lackey, for once I had fallen under the table I did not know until the next day at nine o'clock whether I was dead or alive.'

Mauvillon maintains that he was a week in bed recovering from this bout.

By and large the customs of the provincial middle classes were simple and patriarchal. To quote Mauvillon once more 'The people have integrity, they are hospitable and inclined to put up well with the difficulties of life. They sleep in hovels, on straw or on the pavement. They seem impervious to poverty and cold. I had a German lackey who always slept under a post-chaise.'<sup>1</sup>

The German housewife played a humble and self-effacing role in the family. She was content to give a hand in the kitchen and to darn the linen. She never read novels but produced children. The life of the head of the family was well ordered and peaceful. Every day his family and a few close friends gathered at his table for a frugal meal. Only on feast days did gaiety hold sway: the father would play a Bach fugue, a chorus would be sung or the family would dance to the harpsichord; and the evening would end to the gay strains of a German gig or an allemande.

<sup>1</sup> Nothing better depicts the simplicity of the habits of the German provincial and the tranquillity of his limited horizon than the engravings and drawings of Daniel Chodowiecki, that excellent painter of bourgeois life (cf. in particular his *Journey to Danzig*, 1773). When they are compared with the engravings of Baudouin, Moreau le Jeune, etc., the contrast between the people of the two nations is very striking.

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Among the people prevailed a state of mind which it is difficult to convey. *Gemutlichkeit* expresses this feeling of well-being, of cosiness, affability, frankness and naturalness which induced the gentler emotions. It was not the spirit of polite graciousness as in France, and still less the humour of the English, but an unconscious and effortless fellow-feeling. A smile, a handshake, a glance, even a silence, served to bring it about. It betrayed its presence more in manners, accent and the play of the features than in actions or speeches. This flower of the soil of Germany, the composition of which it is so hard to define, has today faded or is perhaps quite dead.

In Germany paternal authority was absolute. Mauvillon writes 'While in France flabbiness has reached its peak, German children are brought up in the most Spartan manner. They are accustomed to frugal meals and beds as hard as stones, they are forced to march in the sun to teach them not to fear being sunburnt, to wear thick clothes and coarse linen.'

It was only natural that such an upbringing was unfavourable to fostering the gallantry so favoured in France. 'Here,' Mauvillon writes, 'people of opposite sex cannot be seen speaking to each other or walking in public without exciting comment unless they happen to be husband and wife, or lover and betrothed. A gallant who gave his arm to a lady in broad daylight would immediately have a host of brats at his heels. It is not the fashion. It is enough to see a gallant with a lady to conclude that she is his mistress.'

No woman was allowed to go out unaccompanied: she had to take a servant when she went for a walk, shopping, or to church. The flirt often met with resistance. 'These German women are proud. Tell one of them that she is pretty and she will reply: "What concern is that of yours?" Tell her she is witty, and she will retort: "I've known it for a long time so there is no need for you to tell me." It is not that they do not like being praised, but they do not like it in front of other people for fear of losing their reputations; women are readily looked upon as being of easy virtue if they allow a man to tell them they are charming, or that he loves them.'

Paradoxically, this hypocritical prudery did not prevent im-

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morality Conjugal morals were everywhere very lax, but nowhere so dissolute as in Saxony where the rulers set a bad example Lady Wortley-Montagu was surprised that in Vienna it was ill-bred to invite a lady without her husband and her lover The author of a comedy makes a husband who surprises his wife with a lover say the following lines which were taken from real life 'How ill advised of you, madame Think for a moment; had it been anyone other than me it would have constituted *flagrante delicto*' Although at the court of Berlin the standard of morality was relatively high, one cannot attribute this to the virtue of the women but rather to their utter lack of charm

The Germans of good middle-class society remained in principle ignorant of worldly pleasures. Civility may have been lacking but, measuring courtesy by the number and depth of the bows, they reproached the French for not retaining themselves in demonstrations of obsequiousness They had no conception, according to Mauvillon, 'of the difference between *respect*, the attitude of the inferior towards his superior, and *politeness*, a courteous but free manner used between equals, and by superior to inferior'

Nor were they seduced by the subtleties of the mind, by the light touch which the Italians and French could give to a conversation Voltaire's ironic zest was above their heads, they knew no other weapon than the bludgeon of scholastic pedantry when confuting or defending an opinion Good positive Germany was a hundred leagues removed from that sensibility which has nevertheless been called German There were no salons comparable with those of Mme Geoffrin, Mme du Deffand or Mlle de Lespinasse When Mme de Stael visited the small German capitals she was astonished at the mediocrity of the parties and the boring conversation In Weimar alone she found a tiny but marvellous island in a sea of provincial dullness where life rose above petty ambitions, vain resentments and eternal gossip

'The German mind,' she wrote with admirable lucidity, 'is less in harmony than any other with our calculated French frivolity One rarely finds among Germans that quickness

of wit which animates a conversation and engenders new ideas. Conversation, like talent, exists nowhere outside France. The art of telling a story, one of the greatest charms of conversation, is very rare in Germany. The audience is too easy-going, it does not get bored quickly enough. In France the man who speaks is an usurper who feels himself surrounded by jealous rivals and wishes to hold the position by force of success. In Germany he is a legitimate proprietor who can enjoy his recognised rights<sup>1</sup> in all tranquillity.

In the eighteenth century the people had neither access to nor share in the pleasures of the mind, not so much because they despised them but simply because they were unaware of their existence. Society gatherings were few, familiarity and monotony reigned at them. When the conversation flagged, the guests made music, danced or played childish games including consequences, hunt-the-slipper or blind-man's-buff. They told fortunes with cards, and these little parlour-games made the evening pass agreeably.

The middle classes, having been freely admitted to princely

<sup>1</sup> A Frenchman travelling through Germany in an attempt to propagate French wit and customs admitted the total failure of his efforts. 'An envoy of the Palais-Royal, I carried into the depths of Germany immense wigs, ringlets, large buttons and square shoes. I wanted to popularize the pun and the charade, to introduce some tone into the best society and the happy knack of embarking skilfully upon a score of subjects. Waste of time! Imagine a butterfly suddenly set down among a host of caterpillars. It is an unkind comparison, I admit, but how else can one describe these vandals. Monsieur, alternately smoking and drinking, speaking our language haltingly, talking for an hour on the same subject, and racing at every opportunity and crowning it all with the little esteem they showed us. And the women! *Grand Dieu!* Must I confess to the wounding of my *amour-propre*? I thought luck would be with me as I entered a post chaise. Well, I received not the vestige of a favour. These taciturn German women seemed to find me incredibly funny. A score of times a *bon mot* went over their heads. I consoled myself by thinking that they would have mocked me had they understood.' This letter bears the signature *Leger de Sansfonds*, an obvious pseudonym. It is taken from a volume entitled *Choix de lettres intéressantes sur divers sujets, écrites en 1789*, Paris 1810.

circles until the eighteenth century, suddenly found themselves excluded from the court and treated as yokels. Only on the most exceptional pretext could a few of them enter these circles, and even then they were usually received with a smirk. When their wives and daughters appeared they were laughed at on account of their clothes and their old-fashioned manners. Nevertheless, in towns where the court was popular it had a great influence on bourgeois society. The Germans, endowed with little will-power and individual initiative, had always had a need to admire. Frederick II complained that he was 'tired of ruling over a nation of slaves', and Moser expresses the same sentiment when he writes 'Germany's chief characteristics are obedience and unflagging servility'.

The German made a mystic cult of strength, authority and respect for hierarchies, he looked with ecstasy at his sovereign, considering it right and proper that he should possess a palace, a theatre, a handful of books, euphemistically called a library, a gallery containing a few third-class pictures, a few vases and jars of insects termed a museum, representing as a whole the *ne plus ultra* of taste and magnificence. This explains why the middle classes, while criticizing the laxity of morals at court, tried to ape the customs of high society and as a result were contaminated by the immorality reigning there.

To sum up life in the capitals of these petty German princes was drab and gloomy. Casanova who had travelled the country from end to end writes in his *Mémoires* 'The towns of Germany—I mean those of the second order—are havens of innocence and peace. Patriarchal customs, a simple and monotonous life, no excitement or boisterous pleasures; sensuality dies there.' The silence was broken only by the monotonous roll of drums at the mounting and changing of the guard, or the rattle on the cobblestones of some old baron's heavy coach jolting painfully to court.

## Fashions and Travel



In the eighteenth century a German considered luxury in clothes as a distinctive mark of an individual's rank in the social hierarchy. In 1739, in Baden, ostentation went so far that linen edged with precious lace was hung out of the windows so that no one should be left in ignorance of the affluence to be found inside the house. In the capital towns, both great and small, the courtier had to display a certain elegance in his appearance, primarily to gratify his self-esteem and also to conform to the demands of his sovereign.

People were not allowed to dress in these courts as they pleased and the prince decreed what was to be worn down to the smallest details. Vienna set the tone. For the use of guests to Schloss Laxenburg, Maria Theresa instituted a regulation costume for men consisting of a red tail-coat over a green waistcoat embroidered with gold, and for the women a red dress woven with gold and silver and adorned with lace. Following her example, Dresden insisted upon a scarlet-and-gold court dress for men and blue and gold for ladies. The Landgrave of Hesse had a special costume designed for each of his palaces. At Munich, the Elector Maximilian Joseph III<sup>1</sup> insisted that guests to Schloss Nymphenburg should appear in a green uniform and a waistcoat with white lapels. Furthermore, he decreed all the details of his courtiers' dress for the thirty-three gala days in the year.

It was a compliment to the sovereign for the courtiers to vie with each other in the elegance and sumptuousness of their

<sup>1</sup> This ruler had such a mania for ornament that he took twenty years to form his famous collection of diamond buttons.



clothes Count Bruhl, in Dresden, seems to have pushed coquetry to the extreme. He boasted of possessing 500 coats, 47 furs, 12 cuffs, 75 swords, 102 watches, 87 rings and 103 bottles of scent. Prussia was the only court to escape this virus. Friedrich-Wilhelm I wore military uniform exclusively. In an attempt to favour the Prussian manufacture of cloth he threatened the severest physical penalties to all those who appeared before him in silk or lace of foreign origin. He even banned the wearing of cottons and cashmere, the import of which was prohibited at the Leipzig market<sup>1</sup> until 1750. His son, Frederick II, possessed the shabbiest wardrobe possible. He was furious when one of his intimates adopted an effeminate fashion, and one day, without ceremony, he flung von Kameke's cuffs into the fire. He put on undress uniform to receive the Emperor Joseph on the latter's official visit to Berlin.

Here as elsewhere in Europe, Paris set the tone in fashion. It was the mirror in front of which Europe dressed. For a German dignitary to be attired in the French mode counted more perhaps than birth or rank. Frederick II writes with a trace of ill-concealed irritation: 'French taste dictates our furniture, our clothes and all those trifles over which fashion exercises its tyranny.' This passion, carried to excess, has developed into a mania. Women, who always exaggerate, have in this respect surpassed the bounds of extravagance.<sup>2</sup> Goldoni on the other hand notes in his *Memoirs*: 'Fashion has always been the driving force of the French, and it is they who set the tone throughout Europe—in the theatre, decoration, dress, trimmings, jewellery, hair styles and all forms of pleasure. Everywhere people try to imitate the French.'

In Germany certain journals were received from Paris full of descriptions and engravings in which the fashions appeared exaggerated and distorted. These were welcomed like oracles.<sup>3</sup> But

<sup>1</sup> Despite efforts to pursue a protectionist policy, from the middle of the eighteenth century Lyons furnished almost exclusively the silk for the coats and hangings of the palaces, lace from Alençon, Argentan and Bayeux replaced the pillow lace from Milan or Venice.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick II. *Des mœurs et des coutumes sous la dynastie des Hohenzollern*.

<sup>3</sup> The French fashions were copied so clumsily that when a German princess was to marry a French prince the court, fearing that the attire in which she would appear would be calamitous, sent coffers full of

errors of interpretation were only one of the dangers to which the dandies were exposed. they also had to follow the accelerated rhythm of the *bon ton* French fashions 'which seemed to have wings since they travelled so far' (Fontenelle) changed so rapidly that the Germans had the greatest difficulty in keeping up. Rivarol remarked wittily that Europe hardly had time to tire of them. Thus every means was employed to procure details of the latest way of draping the flounces, of building up the curls of a wig, of wearing rouge and patches. When the princes were unable to visit Paris in person to form an opinion, they paid correspondents to give them precise details as to how they should dress. The Duke of Gotha kept a secretary whose sole task was to inform him month by month of the Parisian fashion.

The French mode raged throughout Europe. French dress-makers hurried up and down Germany to publicize their latest models, and Bardot, who, as a doctor, accompanied Prince Friedrich of Wurtemberg, Governor of Montbéliard to Berlin in 1775, relates in his *Souvenirs* his meeting in Strasbourg with Mlle Martin, 'who has received from Paris a selection of new dresses which she will distribute in Germany'.

The most picturesque method of distributing French fashions throughout Europe was doubtless *La Poupée de la rue Saint-Honoré*. This jointed puppet 'dressed *à la mode* and with the latest hairstyle was sent abroad to display the fashions reigning at the Court of France. It went from north to south, it reached Constantinople and Saint Petersburg, and the French cut was repeated by all the nations, slaves to the taste ruling in the rue Saint-Honoré.<sup>1</sup> Mlle de Scudéry, at the Hôtel de Rambouillet, helped to dress the dolls destined to carry the latest French taste to Germany. From 1680 onwards two Parisian dolls were sent, first to London and then to Italy,<sup>2</sup> finally reaching Germany before

dresses made by Parisian dressmakers in the coach that was to meet her at the frontier.

<sup>1</sup> Mercier *Tableaux de Paris*.

<sup>2</sup> 'At the beginning of each season in the Merceria in Venice could be seen a dressed doll, known as *La Poupée de France*, this was the prototype and any extravagance was acceptable provided the women conformed to this original' (Goldoni).

being dispatched to the rest of the continent. They were awaited everywhere like the Messiah and placed on display in the largest shops in the capitals. 'Big Pandora' set the style for ceremonial dress, 'Little Pandora' for negligées. Delille has celebrated these messengers of fashion with all the lyricism of which he is capable

*Ainsi de la parure, aimable souveraine,  
Par la mode du moins, la France est encor reine  
Et jusqu'au fond du Nord portant nos goûts divers,  
Le mannequin despote asservit l'univers*

The last doll survived the monarchy. During the wars of the Revolution the generals of the two opposing camps received orders to let it pass through the lines. It disappeared with the arrival of Napoleon who, to the dismay of the public beyond the Rhine, forbade its export.

Armed with models from France, German women tried to appear in the latest fashion. With great enthusiasm and lack of moderation they adopted voluminous flounces. According to her page, Karl von Lyncker, the Duchess Anna Amalia of Weimar wore skirts so wide that they overflowed from the windows of her coach. At the Court of Berlin, where there was a limited number of chairs, a decree specified the width of skirts so that they should not spread from one seat to the next. Ladies of high rank only allowed their ladies-in-waiting to wear flounces of a reduced size. Middle-class women had to be content with small draped skirts known as 'commodes'. However massive a woman was, she had at all costs to reduce her waist, and Countess Eliza von Bernsdorf relates that many of the ladies, when invited to appear at court in the evening, began to lace their corsets early in the morning. Countess Krassinska boasted of having a sixteen-inch waist.

The fashion for wigs became general after 1700, and even children below the age of ten were forced to wear them. Powdered wigs were, however, confined to persons of quality and were regarded as a sign of affluence.<sup>1</sup> Count Bruhl, the *arbiter elegant-*

<sup>1</sup> The river fares from Ratisbon to Vienna on the Danube, and from Mainz to Cologne on the Rhine, were doubled for the traveller who wore a wig.

## GERMANY AFTER THE PEACE OF WESTPHALIA

*tiarum*, possessed 1,500 wigs—'that was a great many', said Frederick II, 'for a man who had no brains' Gentlemen of some standing engaged French barbers to make them wigs of novel shapes, bag-nets, and hair-nets of horsehair, tow, cotton, and even of copper or steel wire A well-tended wig might last for seven or eight years

Make-up had to be used with discretion if the wearer wished to escape ridicule Many women waited impatiently for the arrival of French rouge, a speciality which enjoyed almost a monopoly in Europe Articles for the *toilette*—bottles of unguents or scent, sachets and patches—were furnished by Paris, and Mme de Rebenac was obliged to explain to the Electress of Bavaria the use of several accessories of which, the princess admitted, she had never heard

The painstaking German women then believed that they were dressed in the latest French fashion, but the dolls took a long time to make their round, and often gave the smart ladies of these little courts ideas which were very out of date Nicolai, when he was in Stuttgart, wrote, 'The people here are dressed in the French mode but not the latest' When the Grand Duke Paul of Russia passed through Frankfort in the summer of 1782 on his way back from France, where he travelled under the name of the Comte du Nord, the ladies of his suite noticed that the dresses worn by the noblemen who had come to pay their respects to the traveller 'were two seasons behind those of Paris' <sup>1</sup>

Thus France ruled over German fashions as despotically as she did over every other activity. French civilization held the German aristocrat in thrall from early morning till late at night As soon as he rose he placed himself in the hands of a French valet, who powdered and shaved him and curled his hair He then received a French tailor who displayed the latest attire from Paris After this his professors of language, deportment, dancing and flute-playing

<sup>1</sup> 'The Germans buy good taste for its weight in gold, convinced that nothing pretty or beautiful exists in the way of clothes, carriages and furniture unless it comes from Paris Any discarded fashions are good enough for Germany provided they are extravagant and new' (Pferhard *Des sources de l'expansion de la langue française en Europe*, thesis submitted to the Berlin Academy)

—usually French—groomed his mind and his manners. Finally there were conferences with a French chef, French gardeners and a French huntsman who arranged a hunt in the manner of Versailles, and a French impresario who would submit the choreography of a ballet

Before the arrival of stage coaches (about 1800) public travel in Germany was more uncomfortable than anywhere else in Europe. At the beginning of the eighteenth century a certain Count Lillien had introduced carriages which carried freight and mail, with a few seats reserved for wealthy passengers. Then the family of Thurn und Taxis obtained the monopoly of the Empire's general postal service, a source of enormous profit, making contracts with a score of states and inaugurating forty transport routes. The traveller could use either the ordinary post, which cost 26 kreuzers (about three farthings) per mile, or the more expensive special post, which cost about 1½ thalers per mile (about three-pence in English money). These mail coaches remained in service until 1766, the year in which the journals could announce the first closed carriages as a sensational innovation.

In Germany one travelled at a snail's pace. Casanova took three days to go from Magdeburg to Berlin, a journey of 85 miles, Sophia Wilhelmina ten days from Bayreuth to Berlin (220 miles), Bielfeld, twelve days from Frankfurt to Berlin (330 miles), ten from Berlin to Dresden (120 miles) and two from Munich to Augsburg (40 miles). The slowness of these journeys was due to various factors—the faulty construction of the vehicles, the bad state of the roads and the crossing of frontier posts. In the first place the vehicles were not solidly built. The breaking of an axle was so common an occurrence that Ritter von Lang maintains that the travellers often betted which way the coach would fall at the next bend in the road. Prince Lichtenstein experienced two accidents of this type between Munich and Ansbach. The poet Zander-mann was drowned near Weimar while crossing the ford of the Ilm, the smallest and least dangerous of all rivers. On the stages the halts were interminable, due to time wasted by meals and

changing horses, these were sometimes not available and had to be hired from local peasants. The caprices of the postillions also had to be taken into account; they sometimes caused unpleasant incidents.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the roads in Germany often became quagmires, as can be learned from sundry travellers' accounts. Sophia Wilhelmina declared the Bayreuth-Berlin road to be 'devilish'. Voltaire wrote to Frederick II in 1750 'Sire, what a mongrel country Westphalia is, one travels three miles in two days'. It must be noted that in this region roads were rare until 1770. People only travelled on horseback—Karl-August of Weimar and his companion Goethe both used this mode of transport. 'Main roads,' as we should call them today, only existed in certain parts of the country. Prussia had none until the death of Frederick II who, for political and economic reasons, was anxious to prevent his subjects travelling. According to him, Prussian money should be spent inside the frontiers of the kingdom and the more the postillions were delayed by the state of the roads the more the inn-keepers and taverners would profit.

The slowness of the journey was doubled by enforced halts at various customs houses where passports were examined and taxes levied.<sup>2</sup> The crossing of a number of small states in the course of one day with their several frontiers and their different currencies caused added difficulties. Carolines had to be converted into sovereigns, gold marks into thalers, florins into ducats, pfennigs into kreuzers. The traveller found himself caught in a web of different currencies, and the situation was even more involved when it was a case of evaluating depreciated coinage.

The princes, in an attempt to increase their budgets, did not

<sup>1</sup> Frederick the Great liked to tell the story, which amused him vastly, of the arrival of a certain M. Cogolin. This Frenchman was travelling from Potsdam to Berlin, thinking that the coach was going too slowly, he abused the postillion and even went so far as to cane him. The man got off his horse, forced Cogolin to leave the carriage and put down his baggage on the road after giving him a good beating. The traveller had to proceed on foot.

<sup>2</sup> Import taxes were usually very high. The Rhemish customs brought an annual revenue to the Palatinate of between 18,000 and 20,000 florins, those of Mainz as much as 60,000.

hesitate to circulate coins of debased value. Thus it was almost impossible to fix an intrinsic value for the various coins and the traveller was obliged to be content with an approximation varying from day to day according to the time and place.

Another shadow lay over German travel, the inns at the stages were not to be recommended either for comfort or cleanliness. 'If you ask for drinking water at an inn or a coaching house in Germany, they bring you muddy water to wash your hands. When you make your host understand that it is for drinking purposes, he or one of his menials will tell you that it is dangerous and that you would do better to drink wine or beer. If you insist he will bring you a little—but very little—just to satisfy your obstinacy. As soon as you start drinking the whole village begins to laugh.'<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich-Eugen, prince-governor of Montbéliard, and his retinue stopped on their way to Berlin at Die Drei Kronen, the famous Mainz hostelry where 'the only comfort they met with consisted of fleas and bedbugs'. Jordan relates that the inns usually possessed 'two large rooms for travellers, one with a stove and several dining-tables, the other where everyone slept, both men and women, complete strangers to each other. The beds were almost touching'. In 1700 Collini congratulated himself upon the fact that there was some improvement in the inns 'this is due to a recent innovation—guest tables, purporting to be the host's table but placed at the disposal of travellers. Payment is made per head and the price fixed so that there can be no deception. Nothing could be more practical. The use of *tables d'hôtes* is too little known in France and almost unknown in Italy where one is cheated shamefully with no redress.'

Indeed, it is easy to understand the fears expressed by contemporaries at the difficulties which assailed the traveller when he was obliged to take to the road.

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu *Voyages*

## The New Age



The eighteenth century did not end without profound changes occurring which radically upset the social and intellectual life of these small German states. Germany did not escape the contagion of the new ideas from France, and the efforts to achieve emancipation led in Germany, as in the rest of Europe, to the New Age and the principles which were to prevail in the nineteenth century.

As in France, the first strivings for independence appeared in literature. The movement, which can be dated approximately between 1756 and 1780, was known as *Sturm und Drang* from the title of a play by Klinger and is not particularly easy to characterize. The best translation of these words is probably 'storm and stress'. It was a revolt staged by young writers against man-made laws as a whole, against a society which thwarted them in every respect. Unknown aspirations urged these pioneers to claim the right to live according to their ideals. They dreamed of a reaction against the hitherto flourishing Hellenism, of a freedom from all the ancient laws of aesthetics. Klinger, one of the outstanding leaders of the movement, wrote in 1775 'I am torn by passions which should crush everything around me. Each moment I should like to pulverize the whole human race together with all that lives and teems – and then fling myself into the chaos.'

This farcical exaltation was nothing more than a form of pre-romanticism, a fermentation where romanticism was already strong. Its leaders were a group of writers who, despite their undisputed talent, remained schoolboys, clever triflers who disappeared like meteors. The flower of the movement never blossomed. Classicism was soon to reclaim its rights, and a few serious



thinkers, Herder the first among them, restored some order in this confusion which, although picturesque, was pretentious and sterile.<sup>1</sup>

This thirst for emancipation was not confined to literature. From the middle of the century the theories of the French philosophers timidly crossed the frontiers. Until then the Germans had hardly realized that these social questions existed; they were heatedly discussed in Parisian literary and political salons but remained a closed book for the minds beyond the Rhine. The 'new ideas', as they were called, penetrated Germany with the works of the French Encyclopaedists and were soon considered as a kind of gospel. Gradually the venerable *hinc-à-brac* of the old German Empire crumbled and the 'Age of Enlightenment' dawned. It corresponded to what the French call *la philosophie des lumières*. In future an attempt was made to derive from *a priori* ideas the superior laws of reality, to subject experience to the verification of reason. Descartes in the seventeenth century, and later Kant, had foreseen and indicated this duel between theory and empiricism. Without renouncing the old Christianity,<sup>2</sup> the progress of modern science was accepted and everything was submitted to the magnifying-glass of reason. It was a recognition of what today we call free thinking. From this moment humanity lost its unfailing good humour. People became serious-minded, even quibblers. Virtue replaced harmless vices, the same virtue as was extolled by Rousseau and which would reappear in the speeches of Robespierre. To consider affairs of state as the stagnant waters of a calm

<sup>1</sup> The principal exponents of *Sturm und Drang* were Klingler, Müller, Geisler, Müller and Leisewitz. The latter's tragedy, *Julius of Tarentum*, was a prototype of the work of the half-demented creature Lenz, the author of *Reflections on the Theatre*, published in 1774, and of a play of the utmost extravagance. In one of Friedrich Müller's tragedies the hero at the opening kills his father, in the second act he marries his own sister, in the third he discovers that this sister is his mother and in the fourth he cuts off his ears and nose, in the fifth and final act, after strangling his mother, he poisons his sister and is hurled by the furies into hell to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning.

<sup>2</sup> A noticeable attenuation of religious feeling can be observed in Germany. In Austria, ten years before the Revolution, Maria Theresa suppressed many Catholic feasts which took up a third of the year and greatly hampered the economic life of the country.

lake on which one sailed in a boat with a capricious woman at the helm, was a thing of the past. Wars were no longer considered to be hunting parties governed by etiquette, where each manœuvre was apparently foreseen and laid down in advance—those irresolutely conducted wars with small and badly disciplined armies which lasted until people had forgotten the actual *casus belli*. People were thrilled by the innovations of the Genevan moralist in matters of education, by the scepticism and tolerance of Voltaire, and by the political theories of Montesquieu.

The publicist Forster, who exercised a profound influence on the minds of the Rhineland population, writes in 1788 'Idleness and pleasure filled the lives of the insolent classes whose coarse sensuality, indolence and profound ignorance set a most disastrous example. The priests thought only of satisfying their gluttony and their lusts, the nobles tried to banish boredom with feasts, concerts and dancing. On all sides chques, jealousy and discord, everywhere a desire for a change of the existing forms. Reason rebels against political tyranny. This ferment heralds a new doctrine.'<sup>1</sup>

From 1760 onwards fashion decreed that one should be 'a philosopher'. Throughout Germany, and particularly in the north, equality was the ideal. The burghers eagerly preached liberal principles. Feudal trappings crumbled. The punishments of the pillory, the wheel, the cane, the cutting off of ears, tongue or fingers vanished and were no more than memories of barbarous times. Torture was abolished in Prussia (1764), Baden (1767), Mecklenburg (1769), Saxony (1770), and Bavaria (1779). Württemberg, Baden and Weimar adopted the new theories despite the protests of the privileged classes. It was believed that an era of humanity, tolerance, progress, justice and the public good—those virtues so loudly proclaimed by the Encyclopaedists—had arrived. Reforms were demanded on all sides and the rulers themselves became adepts in what was then termed 'benevolent despotism'. They suddenly became philanthropists, gave the signal for an awakening and set an example of reform. Joseph II of Austria dubbed himself 'the worshipper of humanity', Frederick II in-

<sup>1</sup> As early as 1758 Zimmermann wrote 'We live in the dawn of a great revolution of a new separation of the light from the darkness.'

stead of saying '*l'Etat c'est moi*' preferred to style himself '*le serviteur de l'Etat*'. His formula, 'all for the people and not by the people', was already tainted with rationalism and Germany had no difficulty in following the trail blazed by the soldier king whose popularity was so great that even in Bavaria, when that country was at war with Prussia, every house proudly displayed a portrait of the enemy sovereign.

The era of fastidious pedantry and pompous futility which filled court life was over. Instead of flattering their self-esteem by keeping a troupe of dancers, the princes prided themselves on no longer running into debt. They determined 'to make their subjects happy', they assumed a philosophical tone and no longer attracted to their courts astrologers and alchemists but scholars who had recently been given the name of 'economists'—men who boasted of having discovered the source of wealth and the secret of national prosperity. 'Political economy' and 'social reforms' were invented, schools and industry were created. Agriculture came into its own once more, the rulers played at being farmers and Frederick of Baden attended the milking of his own cows.

The Bishop of Wurzburg abolished the ancient titles of respect accorded to princely rulers, fought against nepotism and the venality of his clergy, promising to atone for the faults of his predecessors. Karl-Eugen, Duke of Wurttemberg, on reaching the age of fifty, pledged to reform himself. Weimar, Gotha and Baden became models of good administration and patriarchal government. Let us do justice to these humanitarian princes whose admirable zeal for progress was spontaneous. They cannot be accused of having acted under threats from their subjects who had, since time immemorial, patiently suffered the misfortune of absolutism.

Those with influence followed the example set by the rulers and succumbed to the contagion of the philosophical spirit. In this 'enlightened age' one sees a tendency, particularly in the upper strata, to jeer at the old conventions, formal etiquette, outdated fashions, and to shed what might be called prejudices. Voltaire's smiling philosophy was infectious because it amused. People enjoyed a blasé cynicism, in a materialism devoid of all moral ideas.

Brutality was superseded by politeness, from 1780 clumsiness and bluntness gave place to sentimentality and romantic affectation. A woman would say that she preferred a dead to a living tree. At Weimar, a girl enamoured of Werther, the unhappy lover whose story she had just read, decided to take her own life and jumped into the Inn, drowning almost beneath the eyes of Goethe.

There was an epidemic of facile tears. At Gottingen, two good burghesses, bursting with health, would not greet each other with 'How are you?' but 'Have you shed many tears?' or 'How are your heart pangs?' People no longer believed in ghosts, but at the same time they disbelieved in the immortal soul. There was no more faith in the Devil than in God. The ancient mysteries were renounced but others were demanded in their stead. Elegant, self-styled 'enlightened' society was often the dupe of a rogue such as Cagliostro. Finally its enthusiasm was aroused for mysterious associations which promised to reveal important secrets.

This led to the increasing popularity of freemasonry. Most of the small German princes were masons; the Duke of Brunswick was a Grand Master. To enlist its adepts, freemasonry had recourse to charms of life and promises to transmute metals. Its motto was 'Place at my disposal fanaticism and gold and I will change the face of the globe.'

Dissident sects branched from the main tree of freemasonry, such as the Rosicrucians, and above all, the Illuminati. The latter, founded at Ingolstadt (Bavaria) in 1776 by the teacher Adam Weissenhaupt, like freemasonry had its ordeals and mysteries. During the last quarter of the century it achieved a certain notoriety by declaring itself to be the enemy of both the philosophers and the Jesuits, and by pretending to fear reason. Its official aim was to eradicate all abuses, to spread light, charity and tolerance, and to abolish privileges and feudal rights. Its secret goal was to capture public opinion by the use of two great levers, somnambulism and magnetism, these methods to be used on the ignorant in order to give them the belief and fanaticism they lacked.

The Illuminati adopted every kind of clothing, declaring themselves without country or parents. Monarchy or republic, little

mattered to them provided that their domination, as a result of public credulity, could be peacefully established on the ruins. A contemporary who was initiated into their secrets wrote 'shrouded in Stygian darkness, a sect has been formed of new beings who know each other without having previously met, who understand each other without explanation and who serve each other without friendship. Its goal is to rule the world, to expropriate the power and leave only the sterile honour of a crown to the sovereign. It has adopted blind obedience and the regicide principles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from the Society of Jesus, the ordeals of freemasonry, the ceremonial and subterranean conjuration of the Templars. They intend to destroy all the ills which afflict the earth.'<sup>1</sup>

In Bavaria the sect of the Illuminati, having engaged in open conflict with the Jesuits, was dissolved in 1785 after a violent persecution by the very Catholic Elector, Karl-Theodor. The power of a soldier was soon to abolish it completely. The arrival of Napoleon, victorious on the German battlefields, administered the *coup de grâce* to an association which for twenty-five years had spoken much about the interests of the people but had merely looked after its own.<sup>2</sup>

The press had a different method of spreading the new ideas. Public opinion—in the modern sense of the word—did not exist or at least never manifested itself in Germany until the middle of the eighteenth century. A very restricted number of journals was available, none of which pretended to have a political axe to grind. The French periodicals, *Le Mercure Historique* and *Le Mercure Galant*, distributed sparingly beyond the frontiers, spread French influence and gave news of the court at Versailles. The Dutch *Gazettes* of Amsterdam and Leyden mainly reported questions of home and foreign policy. The *Courier de l'Empire* appeared three

<sup>1</sup> De Luchet *Essai sur la secte des Illuminés*

<sup>2</sup> Despite their suppression, the Illuminati did not lose hope of unseating the Emperor. The famous *Tugendbund*, created at Breslau in 1812–16 by the majority of the upper aristocracy and many of the princes thirsting for vengeance against the detested invader, peopled the vassal states with rebels and established a bloody reign of terror against the French forces of occupation.

times a week, but the costly subscription to this official mouthpiece was a luxury which only the rich could afford

There remained the local broadsheets which confined themselves to petty incidents of interest to a restricted public. 'Appallingly printed on the worst possible paper, they contained merely notes and official notices from the authorities, whose titles filled whole columns, lists of arrivals, promotions, and local gossip. Not a single original article, not an anecdote worth recalling. When it had space available it copied from foreign papers only court news, accounts of audiences and the travels of princes and diplomats.'<sup>1</sup> One looks in vain in these publications for a general survey of events, a piquant anecdote and above all a criticism, but the censorship, which was vigilant and ruthless, makes their reading anything but a pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

The severity of this censorship varied in the different states. At the Court of Hanover, thanks to English influence, the press was freer than elsewhere, but the state of Weimar was where it enjoyed the greatest liberty.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Karl-Eugen of Württemberg deprived his newspapers of all independent thought and sentenced the poet Schubart to ten years' imprisonment for criminal outspokenness.

Friedrich-Wilhelm's attempt to introduce a rigorous censorship in Prussia did not achieve the desired results. His son, Frederick II, insisted upon a régime of liberty for the press. '*Gazetten müssen nicht gemert werden*,' he declared, but Friedrich-Wilhelm II, turning his back on his uncle's liberal ideas, re-established the Prussian censorship in all its severity. The Bishop of Speyer personally exercised the strictest control on everything published in his small territory, condemning to destruction works that displeased him and banishing their authors. In 1765 in Austria a catalogue was compiled of writings and journals of suspect tendencies, but twelve years later this same catalogue was to be banned precisely because it furnished a list of prohibited literature! In

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Libert *Voyage sur le Rhin*.

<sup>2</sup> The censorship was also supposed to apply to correspondence and Lang speaks of an official at the court of Württemberg who filled the post of 'Mail Censor'.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Moniteur Universel*, 5 *Thermidor*, An VI.

1790 all the editorial rooms were still under observation by spies, politics were forbidden in public places and innkeepers were held responsible for any discussion of a press article under their roof. We have to wait until the last quarter of the eighteenth century to see the birth of a host of moderately independent journals. People avid for news then had a choice of *Der Wandsbecker bote* edited by the poet Claudius, *Die Deutsche Chronik* by the poet Schubart (after 1774), *Die Kölnische Gazette*, *Die Mainzer Monatsschrift* (monthly review), and *Das Intelligenz Blatt*, published at Bonn. Schlozer started *Der Briefwechsel* and *Die Staats Anzeigen* whose various series covered the periods 1776-80 and 1783-93. Finally K.-F. Moser edited the *Patriotisches Archiv für Deutschland* (1784-91) and the *Neues Patriotisches Archiv* (1792-1794), in which, inspired by Montesquieu's *Voyages*, he tried to awaken a national spirit.

These two last-mentioned incorruptible publicists, who were considered 'paladins of right' and 'apostles of liberty', did not hesitate to run the gravest risks.<sup>1</sup> In biting and courageous pamphlets which brought them frequent imprisonment they bluntly attacked the crowned heads, dealing them many blows by telling the truth. On several occasions when Maria Theresa learned of some decision taken in privy council she was heard to say 'What will Schlozer think and say of that?' And her son Joseph II never failed to read each morning the article signed by this gazetteer, this 'terror of princes'.

After the arrival of the New Age and the creation of a semi-independent press, it became impossible to muzzle public opinion. Immediately the Revolution broke out there was enthusiasm for the liberal ideas which had led to the revolt. The whole of Europe dreamed of an ideal constitution, the virtues of tolerance were praised to the skies. No more religious persecution, impressment, sales of soldiers to foreign powers, forced labour, and all the disasters which princely hunting caused to the peasants.

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous letters constantly threatened them. Here is an example of them: 'All scholars and intellectuals deserve to be thrashed, particularly those who in their journals incite the people to admire the stupid French constitutions and thus provoke a revolution in Germany.'

The 14th of July was celebrated in Hamburg 'All the young girls were dressed in white a choir sang appropriate airs To the sound of cannon, music, and cries of joy, the crowd drank to the success of the approaching revolution in Germany'

Goethe, who was travelling in the vicinity of Dusseldorf, saw countless busts of Lafayette and Mirabeau to whom divine honours were paid. The historian J von Muller acclaimed the storming of the Bastille as the finest and most notable event since the fall of the Roman Empire Prince August, brother of the reigning Duke of Saxe-Gotha, encouraged the publication of a revolutionary almanac and raised his glass 'to the health of Liberty', the Duchess of Gotha flaunted the new ideas 'The poets' lyres were all attuned Klopstock wrote two odes on the Revolution his jubilation was shared by Kant, Stolberg, Fichte, and Hegel, who all saluted 'the dawn of Liberty'<sup>1</sup> The scepticism of the century turned to enthusiasm, the epic followed minor couplets, the hymn superseded the song

The nobility itself visited Paris, which had become the Mecca of Liberty, to frequent the clubs and to be present at the 'obsequies of despotism' Prince Karl-Konstantin of Hesse-Rheinfeld, a colonel in France who became a Jacobin in 1790, received the title 'General, citizen-philosopher' and insisted upon being called Citizen Karl Hesse.<sup>2</sup> Lesser members of the aristocracy made a point of being on good terms with the National Assembly. Among others may be mentioned a certain Count von Erlach, signatory to a treaty of 'peace and friendship between the French Republic and the county of Erlach'—and today we do not even know the site of Erlach!

Certain princes compounded with the Revolution from fear rather than from sincere conviction This policy explains why those nobles whom the Marquis de Bouillé accused of being 'harsh

<sup>1</sup> Schiller, a radical from early youth, became the people's poet and Klopstock the cantor of the Revolution, they were accorded honorary French citizenship by the Republic (Decision of the National Assembly 26th September 1792)

<sup>2</sup> He was in command of the September massacres at Lyons in 1792, became editor of *L'Homme Libre*, and took part under the Directoire in the Babeuf conspiracy (1797)



and insensitive' showed very little hospitality to the French *émigrés*. Others, and they were in the majority (some laymen such as Württemberg, Baden, Hesse-Cassel, Brunswick, Bavaria, Ansbach, and prelates such as the Archbishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne), welcomed the unfortunate *ci-devants* with kindness which increased as the terrorist excesses doubled in fury.

Then the first burst of admiration for the new France vanished. It was realized that despite its generous aspirations the Revolution could be considered as 'an appeal to all the passions by all the errors', to quote M. de Bonald. A profound distrust succeeded the admiration. Von Humboldt recognized the weakness of the new theories and declared that a constitution based on reason was an ephemeral chimera. Gneisenau, the future general who defeated Napoleon at Leipzig, judged the French who decreed themselves free men as ripe for slavery. It was realized that they were heading for the abyss. The princes discovered that the recent political upheavals, by overthrowing appreciable privileges, by confusing ranks, had delivered bitter blows at the old German society for which they all retained a predilection. The nobles, seeing their titles abolished, saw themselves threatened with enforced idleness with only their rusty armours for company.

When the bloody Reign of Terror opened and the French armies invaded the Rhineland, prejudice changed to fear and then to hatred. Enthusiasm, which had in fact been purely theoretical, collapsed. Germany rediscovered that 'basic servility' mentioned by the Prussian Minister, Herr von Stein, and that innate love of power which it had borne so patiently for so long. The petty sovereigns of the invaded provinces fulminated against the National Assembly which deprived them of the means of levying their taxes and entered the war, seeing in the victory of the *sans-culottes* nothing but the triumph of the riff-raff. The prestige of France, so compromised by the excesses of this period, was only to be re-established during the Napoleonic epic.

The French Revolution and the subsequent wars enriched Germany; they forced the princes to lighten the people's burden, they wiped off the map that infinite diversity of small states whose vanities and interests brought them in constant conflict, trans-

forming them into that formidable bloc with which Europe would have to reckon in future. They roused the nation which, with its limited horizons, had persisted in living in complete apathy. Above all, they inspired in the Germans a hitherto unknown quality—love of country.

The period between 1804 and 1815 was of great importance to the German Empire. Everything was transformed in that ancient and respected edifice, the old institutions gradually crumbled without any new monument rising from the ruins. The Reichskammergericht and the Aulic Council were abolished, the Diet of Frankfurt became a shadow of its former self. The only survivors of the upheaval were the few princes upon whom Napoleon conferred royal rank, which they were to preserve, and a few states tolerated by the victor and governed by princes without political influence in Europe.

What security the world might have acquired had the old state of affairs been prolonged! Faced with a Germany composed of countless small states in constant rivalry, disposed to make and break alliances with equal facility, and open to every influence, there might have been some hope that later catastrophes would have been avoided or at least limited.<sup>1</sup>

Collini in his *Lettres sur les Allemands*, which appeared in 1790, seems to have foreseen the danger to Europe of a united Germany 'which would be able to put 80,000 men into the field'.

<sup>1</sup> General Marbot in his *Mémoires* already defended this thesis when he wrote: 'Although I was very young at the period [1806], I thought that Napoleon made a great mistake in reducing the number of small princes in Germany. In the old wars against France the 800 princes could never act together, some of them furnished a single company, others a platoon and several half a soldier, with the result that the union of these sundry contingents constituted a rabble which deserted at the earliest opportunity. But when Napoleon reduced the number of principalities to 32 he laid the seeds for the centralisation of the German forces. The sovereigns preserved and aggrandised, formed a small, well-trained army. This was the goal the Emperor had in mind in the hope of using to his benefit all the resources of this country. In actual fact it proved successful, but at the first defeat the 32 sovereigns, with one accord, combined against France, and their coalition with Russia overthrew Napoleon, who was thus punished for abandoning the ancient policy of the French kings.'

'Consider,' he wrote, 'how formidable this nation would be could the sovereigns agree and the states they rule act together. But reassure yourselves, this harmony is impossible. The states are all so jealous of each other that nothing could be easier than to divide them.'

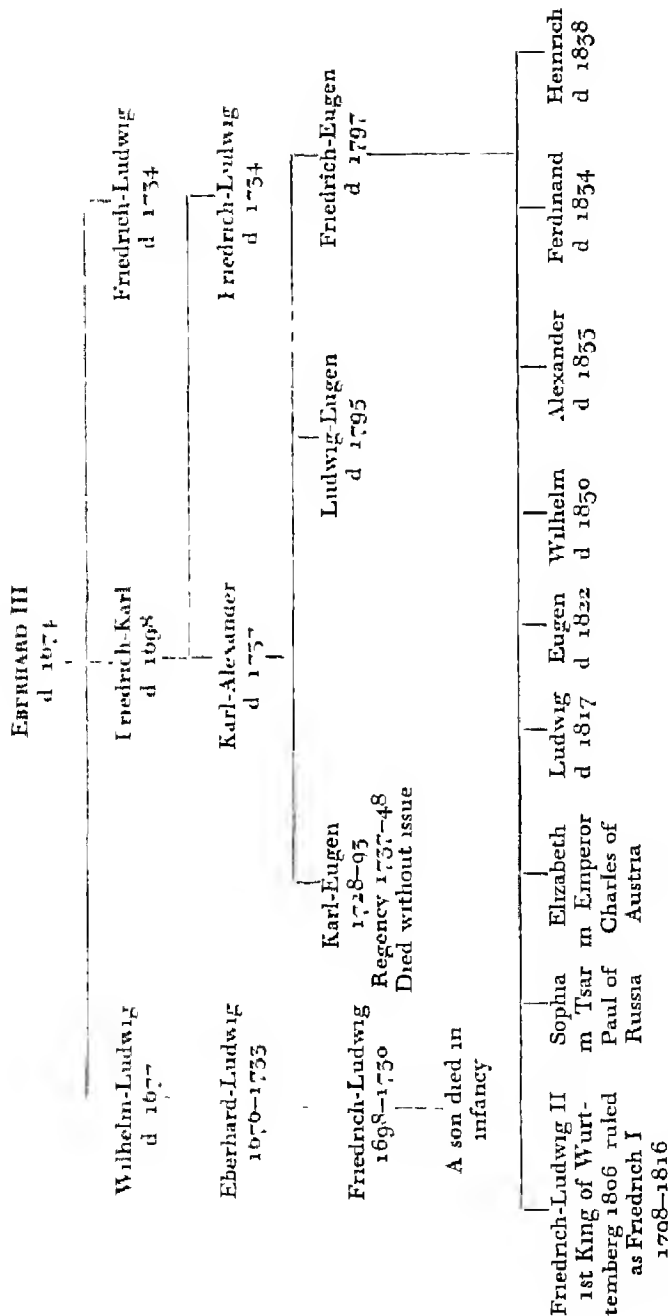
Alas, his last prognostications were never realized. Germany after achieving unity became a great nation, she has known victories and reverses. However, the race itself has hardly changed and in the Germans we meet in this tale we can often recognize those who appeared on the French frontiers in 1870, 1914 and 1939.



## PART II

# The Duchy of Württemberg

# THE FAMILY OF WURTEMBERG



His heirs occupied the throne of Württemberg in the nineteenth century

## Duke Eberhard-Ludwig



The possessions of the Wurttemberg family, forming the part of Swabia bounded by the Black Forest, the Palatinate and Baden, were raised in the Middle Ages to the status of a county by the Emperor Maximilian-Conrad as a reward for services rendered on the field. In 1495 the Emperor converted the county into a duchy and bestowed upon the new Duke of Wurttemberg the post of Grand Master of the Royal Hunt. At one time this duchy was confiscated by Austria for the benefit of Charles V's brother, then restored to its ancient owners on condition that it would always be considered a fief of the House of Habsburg. Finally in 1599 the feudal vassalage ceased, but Duke Frederick pledged himself that in the event of escheat the property should revert to the Imperial family.

'The Duchy of Wurttemberg,' writes Montesquieu, who visited it in 1729, 'is a fine well-rounded domain. A very beautiful and fertile land.' And in truth, the territory was rich in vineyards and forests and its agriculture prospered. Good pasture land, irrigated by the Neckar, supported a number of cattle and horses. From its subsoil iron, copper and fine marble were extracted. The burghers and peasants, grouped in seventy-two towns and four hundred hamlets, were affable, bright and obliging, but according to d'Argens, 'as a general rule an open mind was not a Swabian characteristic.'

Until the end of the seventeenth century Stuttgart,<sup>1</sup> the capital, numbered 6,000 inhabitants (100 years later this figure had only

<sup>1</sup> Stuttgart, which in the local dialect means a 'stud farm', was raised to the status of capital although the town of Wurttemberg gave its name to the duchy.

risen to 22,000). It was still only a village. A brook ran through the narrow streets, which were partially paved with rough pointed cobbles, and were thronged with flocks of geese, herds of cows and sheep which the shepherds rounded up in the morning to the sound of a horn, led to graze on the neighbouring hills and brought back to their owners at nightfall. Montesquieu maintained that 'there were no police, but quintals of powder to powder the hair' According to Pollnitz, 'the wooden, lightly constructed houses with their numerous windows and staircases without banisters were uncomfortable and lacking in beauty' In the few existing hostels because of the sharp cold suffered in the winter the beds were built into cupboards and 'made with two towels instead of sheets between two feather eiderdowns' There were no shops as yet to hven the streets Public markets were unknown, and Montesquieu remarks that in rainy weather the peasants from the surrounding country did not bother to bring in any produce The first brewery opened in 1709 and the first café in 1718 near the Zell gate Stuttgart was in fact a dreary, melancholy capital, where social life was still completely unknown

At the start of the period under discussion, Württemberg was in the hands of Duke Wilhelm-Ludwig Louis XIV had tried in vain to entice this prince into his orbit, the country remained the staunch ally of Austria Before the close of the seventeenth century General Mélaç, at the head of the French army, invaded Württemberg, captured Stuttgart and pillaged it for three days

Duke Wilhelm-Ludwig died in 1677 His heir, Eberhard-Ludwig, being a minor, a regency was instituted comprising his mother the Duchess, and two of his uncles During the regency the post-war calamities do not seem to have affected the serenity of the Württemberg Court An account can be read in the *Mercur de France* of 1684 of a fête given by the young prince, who at that time was nine years old 'His Highness the Duke of Württemberg, after regaling his court with all the pleasures of the hunt, cards and good food, decided on the 15th of last month to give a *divertissement à la française* It was a kind of ballet opera entitled *Le Rendez-vous des Plaisirs*' The décor represented rocky mountains in the foreground and beyond them the sea, on which



Neptune sailed in a chariot drawn by tritons. The actors were chosen from among the courtiers and the dancers from among the ladies-in-waiting. The young prince played the part of Eros. Numerous changes of scene showed in succession a forest and a garden peopled with goddesses and shepherds.

At the age of sixteen the heir, on his majority, undertook the indispensable tour of Europe. Although his country had hardly recovered from the recent disasters caused by the French troops, he was fascinated by France. On his return to Stuttgart he was still thinking of enchanted Versailles, which had welcomed him most cordially. Now he only wished to imitate Louis XIV. Everything changed in Württemberg. Until then its dukes, with their simple bourgeois customs, had lived like the nobles of their land. Eberhard, dazzled by absolutism, of which the *Roi Soleil* was a living symbol, intended to live as a potentate. His immediate programme was to introduce the arts into a country which had previously ignored them. But it was a costly affair trying to ape the Court of France, particularly since the Duke had a revenue of barely two million at his disposal. Nevertheless his stay in Paris had taught him that taxes and certain skilful though somewhat dubious financial operations could often prove very lucrative.

Eberhard-Ludwig's main preoccupation was to give his court the requisite lustre, but he lacked the necessary elements in his circle to accomplish this. The Swabian aristocracy, affecting to recognize no superior except the Emperor, disdained to settle in Württemberg in the service of princes whom they despised. (For this reason magnificent castles are rarer in this region than anywhere else in Germany.) In order to remedy this, Eberhard attracted as many nobles as possible from other parts of the Empire—a host of them came from Mecklenburg—and thanks to this foreign influx, a brilliant house rose in Stuttgart entirely based on the Court of Versailles, with most of the important posts held by Frenchmen.<sup>1</sup>

The young Duke was eager for pleasure, particularly dancing

<sup>1</sup> The town itself began to show its first inclinations to follow Parisian modes. A Frenchman named Aubler attracted the aristocracy to a smart café appointed on the model of those in the Palais-Royal.

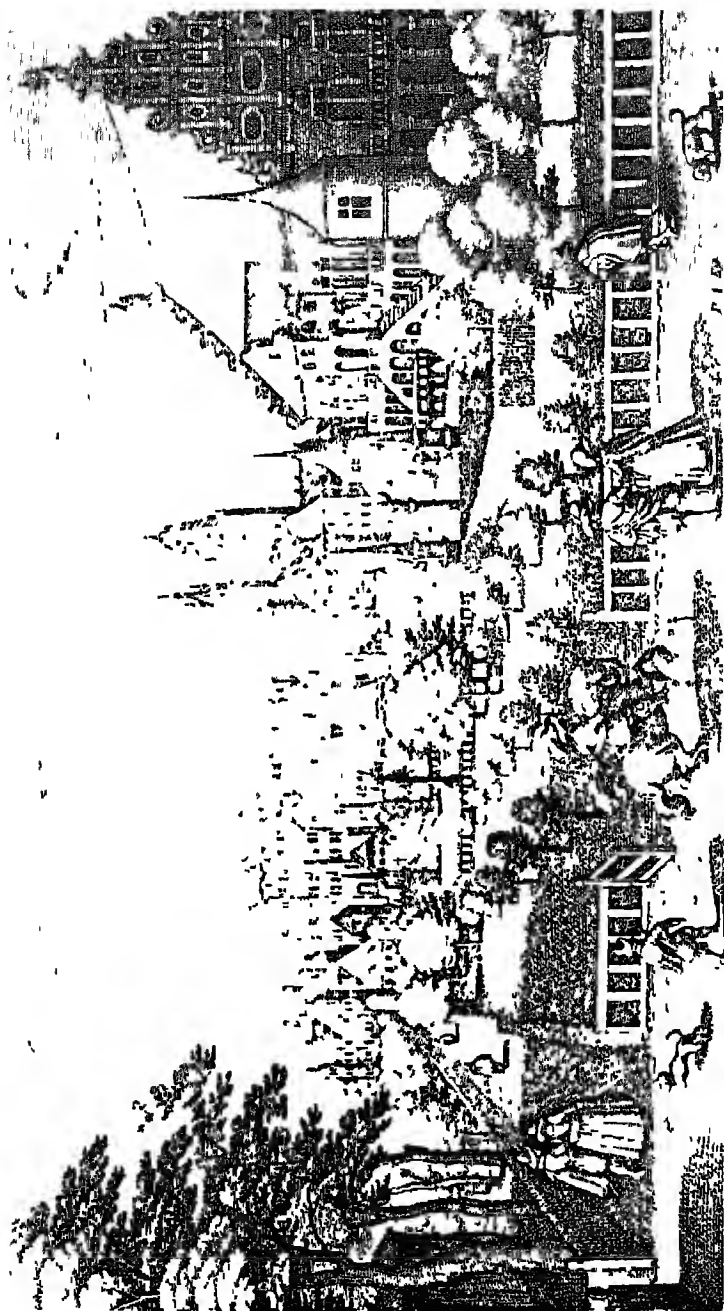
## THE DUCHY OF WURTTENBERG

To the great scandal of the clergy, he organized fêtes and re-doublings at which, to make up the numbers, officials, burghers and even the leading tradesmen were forced to attend. At these *fêtes galantes* the nobles could wear only masks, a domino or the Polish habit, the rest of the company were free to disguise themselves as they pleased.

Finally the Duke thought of taking a wife. In 1697 he married Johanna Elizabeth, daughter of the Margrave Friedrich-Magnus of Baden-Durlach. The following year she presented him with a son, Friedrich-Ludwig.

Two passions seem to have dominated the Prince during the first years of his reign: hunting and his army. In 1702 he founded the Order of Saint Hubert. Three times a week he scoured the forests round the capital in pursuit of stags whose immense antlers soon decorated the walls of his apartments. He was never to be seen without his black wolf-hound, which slept by his bedside at night. This animal, which was very gentle with his master, was of the utmost ferocity when anyone else approached. One day he bit off half the cheek of von Forstner, a courtier, and this bite earned him the name of *Mélac*, after the French general who had just ravaged the Rhine valley.

Eberhard also loved playing at soldiers. The Treaty of Ryswick authorized him to maintain an army of 2,000 men, whom he decked out in pale yellow uniforms (yellow was the Wurttemberg colour). He led them into battle for the first time in the War of the Spanish Succession, where he fought on the Austrian side against Bavaria and France. Thus, at the Battle of Hochstadt he found himself under the orders of Prince Eugène, the famous son of the Prince of Savoy-Carignano and Olympia Mancini. Events however soon took an unfavourable turn for Wurttemberg. In 1707 the country was once more invaded by the French under Marshal de Villars. The Wurttemberg army could not save Stuttgart, which was once more captured and sacked. The Princess Palatine wrote in June of that year: 'I think it is a disgrace that the Duke cannot defend his country better.' Eberhard, forced to flee to Basel, had plenty of time to reflect on the disappointments which a passion for soldiering can bring.



The Old Palace at Stuttgart, by A. Corvin



Wilhelmina von Gravenitz

When he was restored to his estate his bellicose tastes had disappeared. In future he thought only of leading a life of pleasure.

Since Louis XIV had a mistress, Eberhard must have one. At first it was a certain Frau Gayling, whose reign did not last long. She was soon overshadowed by an adventuress who for a period of twenty years was to exercise unlimited power over the Prince and his country and earn the name given to her later—the German Pompadour.

The romance began in 1705. Eberhard, when fighting under the orders of Marlborough, had as his comrade-in-arms a certain Mecklenburg squire of rather dubious origin called Friedrich-Wilhelm von Gravenitz. At the end of the campaign the latter retired to Stuttgart, where he obtained the post of gentleman-of-the-bedchamber. The newcomer, a resolute intriguer, soon won the protection of von Staßfurt, the Hofmarschall, and that of the Duke of Zollein, an ambitious courtier who, although admitting to being 'an old clown', had the Prince's confidence. Von Gravenitz finally secured the favours of a Frau von Ruth, who wielded a certain influence at court. A plot was soon hatched to dethrone the Gayling, whose haughtiness made her universally detested, and to substitute the sister of von Gravenitz. At the time this sister, Wilhelmina, lived with her mother at Gustrow in Mecklenburg where she led a diabolical existence and 'did not always have enough to eat'. Frau von Ruth suggested that Frau von Gravenitz should send her her daughter. Offering her accommodation, she promised to introduce the girl into the best society and even to get her invited to court functions. The plot had every chance of success but on one condition: since German was considered a dialect of the people, Wilhelmina must be able to speak French. As it happened, she had received lessons from a Frenchman, M. Gabriel, and was very fluent in the language.

Fraulein von Gravenitz, although delighted by the invitation, could not obtain her mother's permission to accept it, to prevent any attempt at departure she refused to give her daughter the money for the journey. Wilhelmina was not to be thwarted. Borrowing a few florins from M. Gabriel, she fled one night from the

maternal roof and appeared unexpectedly at Neuhaus, Frau von Ruth's country house outside Stuttgart. Her brother was waiting for her.

Although she was not a beauty, the newcomer had a strange charm. The inhabitants of Gmstrow called her '*die Here*' and feared her piercing grey eyes which had the fascination of a snake. The impression she made on the conspirators was most favourable. 'She is a pearl,' declared Frau von Ruth, and immediately made up her mind that her charming voice destined her to appear at the musical diversions at court. In May 1706 Wilhelmina was given a part in a performance of La Fontaine's *La Coupe Enchantée*. The Duke noticed her and applauded. He asked questions about the actress and insisted upon being introduced to her. He even condescended to give her his arm and to lead her to the supper table where, despite the presence of both the Duchess and the Gayling, he sat down opposite her. Frau von Ruth, encouraged by this initial success, handled the intrigue so successfully that after a few weeks the Duke insisted that Wilhelmina should participate in all the amusements at court. He lodged his new conquest in the Schloss and made her lady-in-waiting to the Duchess. The latter, after suffering this hideous affront for some time with gentleness and resignation, appealed unsuccessfully to her family in Baden. She then retired to her apartments, turning her back upon the man whom she accused of base treachery. The Duke realized that the two women could no longer live under the same roof. He therefore installed his favourite in the Jägerhaus,<sup>1</sup> a building which contained the quarters of the Master of the Royal Hunt and kennels for his hounds. The first floor was transformed for Wilhelmina into a charming suite appointed with furniture from Paris. It consisted of an elegant bedroom, a bathroom with a silver bath and a boudoir whose walls were entirely covered with mirrors. During the winter season of 1706 to 1707 the Jägerhaus became the rendezvous of smart society. The young

<sup>1</sup> The Jägerhaus was situated in the Königstrasse opposite the Crown Prince's Palace. The Gravenitz lived in it from 1707 to 1710. It was later reserved for guests visiting the Stuttgart Court. In 1803 it became the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and was demolished in 1818.

woman was seen driving through the town in a carriage with gilt panels and cushions upholstered in yellow silk.

This idyll was brusquely interrupted for some time when Villars invaded Württemberg in 1707. The Duke joined his troops. The enemy did not leave the country until they had systematically looted it and levied an indemnity of 200,000 florins. The Dowager Duchess, who paid this indemnity out of her private purse, wrote an admonitory letter to her son in French:

‘My son, since I have delivered our country from the French scourge I expect you to deliver the count from the scourge of your sin. Return to Stuttgart and do your duty as a husband, a father, a son and a Christian Prince. You will gladden your mother’s heart.

‘Madeleine Sibylle, Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, Dowager Duchess of Württemberg.

‘P.S. This Gravenitz is a whore. I could furnish proof of this, should I so desire. I beg you to believe that she does not deserve your favours.’

During the course of hostilities Wilhelmina took refuge in Switzerland on the estate of the old Duke of Zollern, near Schaffhausen. Eberhard joined her there and considered the moment ripe to put a little order into an equivocal situation. He created Wilhelmina Countess of Urach and married hermorganatically.<sup>1</sup> To justify this rash change of heart he declared to his privy councillors on his return from the marriage ceremony: ‘I am now married to Fraulein Wilhelmina von Gravenitz. The Duchess, my wife, inspired the profoundest aversion in me. I am not asking for your advice. I am the pontiff in my own country and in consequence quite in order with the Good Lord!’

The newly married couple returned to Württemberg and set-

<sup>1</sup> 10th December 1707. It is reported from Germany that the Duke of Württemberg who is married to a Princess of Baden-Durlach by whom he has children has married another woman whom the Emperor made a Countess a few days before the marriage. He has ordered his first wife to leave Stuttgart, the inhabitants of the town who have a great affection for the Princess do not wish her to leave. (Journal de Pangeau.)

tled in Schloss Hohentubingen,<sup>1</sup> an old medieval fortress where Wilhelmina set about organizing her court. She had perforce to find the nucleus from among her own family. She sent to Berlin for her sister and brother-in-law, Sittmann, who was reported to be the former coiffeur of the Countess Wartensleben. For her sister she obtained the post of lady-in-waiting and for her brother-in-law the title of Baron. The eldest Gravenitz brother was well provided for. Frau von Ruth, 'the Maid of Dishonour' as evil tongues, including Wilhelmina, called her, became first lady-in-waiting. Her pages were recruited from among the young students of Tübingen university. Frau von Gravenitz when sent for refused the invitation but not the gifts of money, although she was fully aware of their source. The Duke shouldered all expenses and was completely satisfied with the entourage, the vulgarity and insolence of which should by rights have deeply shocked him. He organized gay excursions to Schloss Urach which he had presented to Wilhelmina and gave himself up to the pleasures of the hunt in the surrounding forests, which abounded in game. Thus all would have been well in this most dishonest of dishonest worlds had it not been for the intervention of the Emperor, who suddenly brought the young couple back to earth with a jolt. Eberhard had been obliged to notify Vienna of hismorganatic marriage. Unfortunately he also announced his intention of raising the Gravenitz to the rank of Duchess of Württemberg, a step which did not lack audacity. By way of excuse and to justify his decision, he put forward what he considered to be an irrefutable argument: the heir his wife had borne him in 1698 was a weak and puny child with a very short expectation of life (the boy actually predeceased his father). In these circumstances the Duke considered that he was being extremely generous in granting his wife the title of ex-Duchess, a large pension and ex-

<sup>1</sup> The keep, surrounded by a deep moat, dominates one of the most picturesque escarpments in Germany. Its famous cellars built in the rock house a cask as large as the Heidelberg tun. The apartments, which consist of a suite of large vaulted salons of rather grim appearance, were often chosen by the Württemberg princes as a setting for their life of pleasure. The neighbouring town of Tübingen on the Neckar is the site of a famous university.



ceptional privileges. Should this argument be set aside, he intended obtaining a simple annulment of his first marriage from Rome in exchange for his conversion to the Catholic faith and the establishment of the Roman religion in Württemberg.

When the Emperor hesitated to sanction this case of bigamy, the Duke lost all sense of propriety. At a great ball given in Schloss Urach (15th September 1707) he introduced Wilhelmina as his true and only wife. At the height of the festivities a courier brought Eberhard the reply from Vienna. It came as a thunderbolt. The Duke was ordered to dismiss the Gravenitz, who was termed an adventuress. He was, however, authorized to take any other mistress he pleased, provided that the present favourite left the territory of Württemberg within the week, under pain of being prosecuted. The Prince, refusing to consider the game lost, hid his emotion and pursued his arguments in Vienna. This time he cited the precedent of King Henry VIII of England. To thwart the Duchess, who was once more appealing to her family in Baden, he tried to arouse the interest of Louis XIV in his case. Then, trusting to luck, he gave orders that the gay life should be resumed at Urach and the fetes, concerts, balls and hunts succeeded each other at an accelerated tempo.

Soon however bad news arrived from all quarters. Although the Pope, Clement XI, was attracted by the idea of converting Württemberg, he considered the second marriage null and void, the Emperor, exasperated by the Duke's insistence, ordered an inquiry to be made on the spot by two of his envoys, the Dukes of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel and Hesse-Cassel. After delicate negotiations the ambassadors offered themorganatic spouse substantial pecuniary advantages on condition that she left the realm immediately.

About this time an incident occurred in Stuttgart which nearly ruined the hopes of the Gravenitz for ever. It was discovered that the favourite held secret meetings with a certain Ferrari, an Italian adventurer who was a great expert in Florentine poisons. Unluckily the Duchess chose that moment to have a suspicious attack of the colic, rumours of poisoning circulated, causing a scene between the Duke and his mistress.

## THE DUCHY OF WÜRTTEMBERG

At last the verdict arrived from Vienna 'the Countess of Gravenitz, who shelters beneath the title of the Countess of Urach, is banished from the territories of the Empire without right of appeal to the Imperial laws. She is to leave Württemberg within six days, failing which she will be arrested and charged with the crime of bigamy.'

Wilhelmina, who beat a strategic retreat, does not seem to have lost all hope. She probably knew the Duke's secret intentions. Eberhard's apparent submission to the imperial decision was, in fact, only a feint, a new plan had just formed in his mind. The young woman had been refused him as a wife—he would therefore marry her legitimately to a man of straw and then nothing would prevent her from reappearing in Stuttgart. The tables would be turned.

In Vienna the Gravenitz's brother had just met Count Wurben, the descendant of a good family which formerly owned large estates in Bohemia but had fallen upon bad times. There was no need to look further. This impoverished nobleman would certainly be bought by the promise of 20,000 florins on the day of the marriage and a yearly pension of 120,000 florins for the rest of his life. Admittedly the candidate was sixty and lacked physical attraction, but what did such details matter if he accepted the bargain? He accepted. The day after the nuptial ceremony the newly married couple appeared in Stuttgart and were installed in the Jägerhaus. The husband was given the position of Hofmeister and his wife appointed Hofmeisterin, a post which forced her to attend the Prince wherever he went. Eberhard's unfortunate wife, outraged by these insolent promotions, made an attempt to prevent the adventuress from living in the castle. It was in vain. She was soon deprived by her husband of her title of Duchess and reduced to the rank of simple Princess. Deeply humiliated, and mortified at seeing the void being created around her, the unfortunate woman, recognizing the growing power of her enemy, retired gracefully.

The last act of the comedy remained to be played. By a skilful manoeuvre the 'Wurben' got rid of her exceedingly inconvenient husband, having him appointed to Vienna as Envoy Extraordinary

of the Court of Wurttemberg. From that moment onwards her triumph was unquestioned. She acquired the highest posts at the court, an apartment in the palace and for a long time her career was to know no obstacle.

## Schloss Ludwigsburg and La Favorite



The palace of the Dukes of Wurtemberg at Stuttgart formed an irregular quadrangle with round towers at the corners. Its thick walls, heavily barred windows, drawbridge and portcullis made it look more like a fortress or a prison than a princely residence. The interior, it is true, offset to some extent the grimness of the exterior. Pollnitz, while calling the palace 'unpleasant', was forced to admit that 'the apartments are beautiful'. Chappuzeau admired in this building, 'one of the largest and most magnificent in Germany', the big hall where the tournaments took place, and the winding staircase leading to it 'so broad that two men could ride up it abreast without touching each other'.<sup>1</sup> Keyser, who visited the Schloss in 1750, describes a vast room in the castle filled with a jumble of stuffed animals, horses and favourite hounds of the Duke, casts, precision instruments and family portraits, among which the effigy of 'a bearded woman had strayed'.

The gardens also made a great impression on contemporary visitors. With their 'thousand embellishments, they surround a house where portraits, statues and antiquities hold the gaze for a long time, and then the fountains with their metal pipes, frogs, lizards, bronze snakes which spray water in all directions, the woodland boys and girls dancing rustic measures, a hunt of various animals, grottoes, labyrinths, an olive grove and an unrivalled heromy, a magnificent theatre, a great sand-covered courtyard for tournaments—all this denotes the residence of a great

<sup>1</sup> Chappuzeau *State de l'Europe vivante*. The author's description dates from 1671, that is to say, in the time of Eberhard III, Eberhard-Ludwig's grandfather.

prince and, moreover, a magnificent and curious one.<sup>1</sup> Among the surprises which the gardens held in store must be mentioned an orangery where several thousand trees in boxes buried in the earth were ranged in rows. The building, warmed in winter by stoves and kept at spring temperature, had a slatted roof 'without nails or bolts, which could be removed in 24 hours' so that the plants could enjoy the fresh air. According to Pollnitz these gardens had been partially redesigned *à la française* in 1704, hardly a trace of them remains today.<sup>2</sup>

Although Eberhard felt no particular aversion for this sumptuous but unattractive residence, he was not displeased at being able to take his revenge on a mettlesome wife by deserting the conjugal hearth. The Grävenitz, for her part, took an immense dislike to Stuttgart. The townspeople refused to accept the triumph of the new favourite without a murmur, they lost no opportunity of manifesting their animosity and went so far as to hurl things at her carriage.

Eberhard and the Grävenitz, therefore, began to look for a place where they could enjoy their love in peace. Their choice fell on Ludwigsburg, a locality surrounded by vast forests well stocked with game, eight miles north of Stuttgart. In 1702 the architect Jensch had built, at the orders of the Duke, a hunting lodge conceived in the baroque style of the Belvedere which Prince Eugen had just had built in Vienna.<sup>3</sup> Eberhard, to satisfy his mistress's whim and, as Montesquieu says, 'his rage for building', determined to create his Versailles at Ludwigsburg. He proposed to transform the large hunting lodge into a palace where he could flaunt the brilliance of his court. This decision resulted in the erection of one of the greatest princely dwellings in Germany, completely out of proportion to the importance of the country.

On the 7th May 1704 Jensch laid the first stone of the building whose foundations were completed two years later. In the meantime the Duke was dissatisfied with the interior disposition

<sup>1</sup> Chappuzeau, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Despite the great alterations carried out in the Altes Schloss when it was turned into a museum, the building remained almost intact until 1945, when it was completely destroyed by bombs.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Joseph Jensch came from Marbach, the home of Schiller.

of the rooms which seemed to him old-fashioned and, as a result, the work slowed down. Then came the War of the Spanish Succession. Eberhard joined his army. In the course of the campaign he met Johann Friedrich Nette who, as was often the case in Germany, combined the functions of architect with those of an Engineer Officer. The Duke discussed his building plans with Nette and captivated by this officer's suggestions immediately appointed him Director of Buildings in Württemberg.

Nette's arrival brought great activity to the site. In 1711—the first buildings were hardly finished—the prince took possession of his new dwelling and christened it with several brilliant fetes. But it was soon apparent that there was not enough room to house the hosts of courtiers and servants. The work continued. Nette died in 1714, on a journey to Nancy. His successor was an artisan named Frisoni<sup>1</sup> whom Nette had employed in the castle on stucco work. Frisoni, helped by his nephew Paolo Retti, directed the work until its completion in 1735.<sup>2</sup>

For nearly thirty years architects were employed in enlarging the Schloss. Jensch and Nette originally built the Alte Fürstenbau,

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Frisoni, who was born in 1685 at Lamo near Como, worked for a long time in Prague.

<sup>2</sup> The name of Retti will reappear so often in the course of this work that, in order to avoid confusion, I think it advisable to give a few details about this large family of artists, who were employed at various German courts during the first half of the eighteenth century. The grandfather, Lorenzo Retti (1664-1714) probably came from Italy with Frisoni, whose sister he had married. He was a stucco worker and was for a long time employed at Ludwigsburg. He had four sons.

*Donato* (1687-1741) stucco worker. Helped his father with the decorations of Ludwigsburg, La Favorite, Stuttgart and Ettlingen.

*Paolo* (1691-1748) architect. Was summoned from Venice by his father in 1717 to help him with the building of Ludwigsburg and La Favorite. We owe to him also the town church and the fountain in the main square of Ludwigsburg (1718), the castles of Freudenthal (1728) and Hemsbach (1729), both presents to the Grävenitz from Eberhard.

*Leopoldo* (1705-51) architect. The most talented artist of the family, he worked at Ludwigsburg, Ansbach (orangery, Lyceum), Stuttgart (Neues Schloss built in 1744), and at Karlsruhe (Schloss). He was given the title of Chief Architect to the Court of Württemberg. In 1750 he published a work entitled *Projets d'Architecture*.

*Livio* (1720-50) painter. Carried out the frescoes and various decorations at Ludwigsburg, Ansbach and Würzburg.

and one wing, the Ordensbau. This first group of buildings served as a point of departure for a whole series of others which, together with the Neue Fürstenbau, formed a vast square round a courtyard 140 yards long and 60 yards wide.

Ludwigsburg is, in fact, the union of eighteen distinct buildings joined by galleries, enclosing no fewer than 452 state or living-rooms. The whole is imposing but disparate and Montesquieu, who visited it in 1729, does not spare his criticism.

'There are two Italian architects here [Frisoni and Retti] who can do as they please but they do not seem to produce anything good.' The façades of the various parts of the castle are not, it is true, particularly attractive. As regards the interior arrangement, the architects seem to have lacked that technique in which French artists were at that time past masters. 'These apartments lack daylight,' wrote Pollnitz, 'the rooms are inconvenient.' For the boiseries, frescoes and stucco work, Frisoni sent for his three brothers-in-law, Antonio Carlone, Diego Carlone and Lucca Antonio Columba, and his three Retti nephews. These Italians in collaboration produced decorations which were sometimes original and charming and sometimes extremely heavy.<sup>1</sup> Pollnitz declared the furniture with which Eberhard adorned his new palace to be 'rich but very bizarre in taste.'

A detailed description of this immense building—a mixture of good and bad taste—is unnecessary. We shall merely take a rapid glance at the parts which are of interest on account of their artistic merit or because of the historic memories they evoke.

Let us enter the oldest part of the castle, the Alte Fürstenbau, built at the back of the courtyard by Jemisch and Nette between 1706 and 1714. Montesquieu admired neither the façade nor the entrance porch. The latter, he said, 'is as shocking and unsatisfy-

<sup>1</sup> Intent upon introducing art to Württemberg, Eberhard summoned master decorators from Italy. They brought with them a host of workers. According to Pollnitz, the Duke even authorized Frisoni to build a Catholic chapel for his compatriots 'on condition that it was demolished on the completion of the castle.' The Württembergers looked askance at these new arrivals and their hatred for the Glatenitz increased, for they accused her of instigating the building of Ludwigsburg, and thus being responsible for this invasion of foreign workers.

ing as the rest. There is an atrium supported by columns which are so small that they rouse you to fury.' The interior offers a few rooms worthy of attention. Eberhard's Audience Chamber has a ceiling painted by Scotti and two fine Venetian chandeliers from the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the Mirror Cabinet on 12th March 1737 Duke Karl Alexander, Eberhard's successor, died in tragic circumstances which we shall relate later. The great Dining Hall saw many illustrious guests; Eberhard received at his table his friend Prince Eugène in 1714, the King of Prussia Friedrich-Wilhelm I and his son the future Frederick II in August 1730; Napoleon ate his meals there during his stay in Ludwigsburg in the autumn of 1805. On 2nd October of the same year in the bedroom of Prince Friedrich-Ludwig, Eberhard's son, a dramatic scene was witnessed between Napoleon and the reigning prince. After a stormy interview the Emperor extracted from his host a promise of alliance against Austria. The Prince resisted for five long hours, saying that only a benevolent neutrality could be expected of him. The conqueror then forced the prince's hand by an argument which was as cutting as steel. 'There are only two alternatives, who is not for me is against me.' On the 5th October, Württemberg's declaration of war was dispatched to Vienna.<sup>1</sup>

From the Fürstenbau runs a long corridor which Eberhard, in memory of Versailles, christened his 'Galerie des Glaces.' It no longer justifies this name since in the middle of the eighteenth century Duke Karl-Eugen removed the mirrors for the decoration of his new opera house in Stuttgart and replaced them by architectural landscapes. Frisoni, who began this gallery in 1709, decorated it with enchanting painted stuccoes. On the order of King Frederick at the beginning of the nineteenth century, these were covered with a coat of whitewash which destroyed all their charm.

The gallery led to the Jagdpavillon begun by Netze in 1714. This hunting pavilion is the best preserved and most interesting part of the whole palace. Divided into four cabinets, its ceilings and fireplaces are decorated with fine Corbellin stuccoes, three of

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor of Russia slept in this same room in June 1815.



the walls are embellished with marquetry by J-J Mayer, the fourth with delightful lacquer panels in the Chinese taste, the work of Sanger and Heim.

The west wing of the Schloss is that first building (Ordensbau) begun by Nette in 1712. It includes the Ordens-Saal where Eberhard, a great hunter, presided at meetings of the Order of St Hubert which he founded. This hall, restored in the Empire style at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the architect Thouret, has little artistic merit left.<sup>1</sup> In the immediate vicinity of the Ordens-Saal is the chapel of the Order built by Finoni in 1720 and used for meetings of the Aulic Council. Duke Karl-Eugen, after consecrating it to the Protestant faith for his wife Frederica of Bayreuth, had it restored in the rococo style between 1746 and 1749. At the same time he ordered from David von Leger the fine organ and the marvellous stained-glass tribune whose sculptures and gilded carving still exist.<sup>2</sup>

A long gallery built in 1726 with a ceiling painted by Scotti (1754-6), housed various pictures bought without much discernment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the Dukes of Württemberg to decorate their palaces, and collected in Ludwigsburg by King Frederick at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The southern side of the courtyard is flanked by the Neue Fürstenbau. Its 150-yard façade looking on to the gardens, the work of Finoni and Paolo Retti (1724-53), is the most successful of all those to be found in the Schloss. This building preserves the remains of the old decoration in the double staircase of honour (curious statues of negroes in painted plaster), the big oval marble

<sup>1</sup> Thouret (1767-1815), despite his French-sounding name, was a Württemberger, born in Ludwigsburg. No important original work can be attributed to him; he unfortunately destroyed the princely dwellings he attacked, replacing most of the baroque and rococo decorations by a cold Germanic interpretation of the Empire style. His misdeeds are visible in the castles of Ludwigsburg, La Favorite, Monrepos, the Neues Schloss in Stuttgart and even at Weimar where, summoned by his friend Goethe, he restored the interior of the castle after it had been damaged by fire.

<sup>2</sup> The pictures in this chapel were for a long time attributed to Guibal, but recent scholarship has refuted this.

hall, and the Salle des Gardes (magnificent panoplies in stucco) But in almost all the living-apartments the eighteenth-century atmosphere has disappeared since Thouret on the orders of King Frederick introduced his icy Empire style in 1815

Finally the eastern part of the Schloss consists of the Ancestral Gallery (1724) All that remains of the original decoration, modified at the end of the nineteenth century, are the walls covered with imitation marble by Antonio Corbellini and the ceiling painted by Carlo Carlone In this broad corridor, 60 yards long, canvases have been collected—most of them of little artistic merit—portraying the members of the Wurttemberg family since the end of the Middle Ages Some of these portraits constitute a fairly complete iconography of the princes who reigned in the eighteenth century and are therefore of particular interest to us—Eberhard-Ludwig, the founder of the castle, his successors Karl-Alexander, Karl-Eugen, Friedrich-Eugen, etc. Nearby is the little wooden theatre built by Paolo Retti in about 1724 according to plans left by his uncle Frisoni, some of the period decoration remains In this theatre small comedies were performed for Karl-Eugen, and on the 4th October 1805, the eve of his declaration of war on Austria, Napoleon attended a performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* there Not far away is the Palace Chapel, the work of Frisoni (1715-25)—the best room in the castle' according to Pollnitz Here can be seen ceilings and paintings by Carlo Carlone and Lucca Antonio Columba, and stucco figures by Diego Carlone and Ricardo Retti Consecrated in 1754 to the Catholic faith by Duke Karl-Alexander, a convert to Rome after his marriage, the chapel became Protestant in 1799

Before returning to the Alte Fustenbau, our point of departure, we pass through the building erected by Frisoni between 1727-55 known as the Riesenbau on account of the four figures of giants which support the staircase, then the Gaming Pavilion, the last work of Nette (1714), composed of four small cabinets placed round a central hall decorated with rich stucco and a pretty ceiling painted in a dome, finally a corridor which Nette carried out between 1712 and 1714 as an appendage to the *Galerie des Glaces* whose walls are laden with a variety of brackets carrying busts

and groups of Turkish prisoners carved out in stucco with a disappointing heaviness.

Near the Schloss are the famous stables where Eberhard collected the finest horses in Europe. According to Pollnitz he liked to train them personally to perform all the figures of the *haute école*.

From 1704 Frison had also undertaken the creation of the French Gardens, of which today no trace remains. These gardens, which were enlarged each year, appeared to a traveller in 1750 as 'the largest one could imagine'. Pollnitz maintained that the numerous terraces which adorned them 'did not suffice to make them beautiful'. Montesquieu praises the view 'over a very deep valley' but adds 'The best of it all has been done by Nature'. Keyser in his journey to Stuttgart in 1729-30 admired avenues flanked with several hundred orange trees brought from Sadima, many of which had 'trunks as large as a corpulent man'.

In winter these bushes were housed in an orangery which became even more famous than that of Stuttgart—an orangery 300 yards long, 'the most beautiful hall in Europe', where fetes were given at a later date.<sup>1</sup>

A long avenue climbs the slope of the park and leads to the little castle of La Favorite, begun in 1713 by Nette and completed by Frison ten years later. This rather tortured baroque edifice comprises a main building flanked with square towers and terminated by two wings. Some of the architectural details seem to be unsuccessful attempts to copy the style of Mansart. Several contemporaries praise the extreme richness of the interior decorations, the carvings and gilded stucco. The furniture and chairs were upholstered in yellow silk, the Gravenitz's favourite colour. This small castle, a present from the Duke to his mistress, was a summer retreat for the lovers and a few intimate friends. Although the exterior has remained intact, the interior has almost entirely lost its baroque-rococo character. La Favorite, in fact, like most of the other residences of the Württemberg family, fell a

<sup>1</sup> From the end of the nineteenth century Ludwigsburg became a barracks and housed a School for Cadets. The castle and the town of Ludwigsburg were spared in the 1944-5 bombing. One bomb hit a wing of the castle.

victim to the restorations carried out by Thouret at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

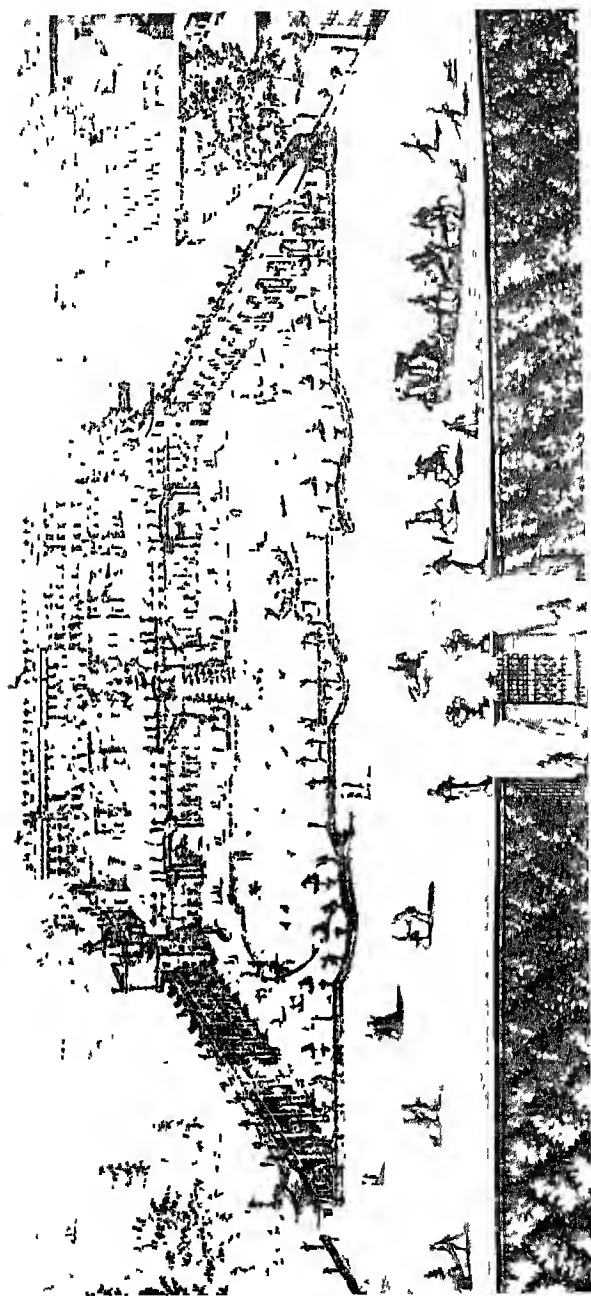
While Eberhard-Ludwig was building his enormous palace he decided that a new town should spring up around it. In the ancient village of Ludwigsburg, a hamlet of barely 600 inhabitants, he caused wide streets to be laid out according to Filson's plan. Seven hundred merchants from Stuttgart were ordered to flank them with houses. The colonists under threat of heavy taxes were forced to base their façades on designs suggested by the architect. On the other hand they were given certain advantages: free lease of the land and free building materials, exemption from taxes for fifteen years and permission to practise the religion of their choice. These methods do not seem to have produced very satisfactory results. Ludwigsburg, whose population soon rose to 10,000, had the melancholy appearance of a little garrison town where 'the weeds sprouted among the cobblestones'.<sup>1</sup>

With its wooden houses and its solitary church—'very small and squahd', according to Montesquieu—it was merely 'the outline of an immense village composed of a hundred squat uniform huts devoid of the most indispensable conveniences and spread out over so vast a space that communications between one end of the village and the other were made very difficult. Twenty-five to thirty huts, more or less in alignment, bordered one side of a street behind which lay the so-called Schloß. These were the runs where the courtiers were lodged'.<sup>2</sup> Finally, to give the requisite brilliancy to his new capital, the Duke 'summoned all his counts and his chancellery to the great mortification of his ministers, he informed them that anyone who refused to settle there would be dismissed from his post'.<sup>3</sup> Thus at the whim of Eberhard, the Swabian Versailles occasionally came to life with the noise of a

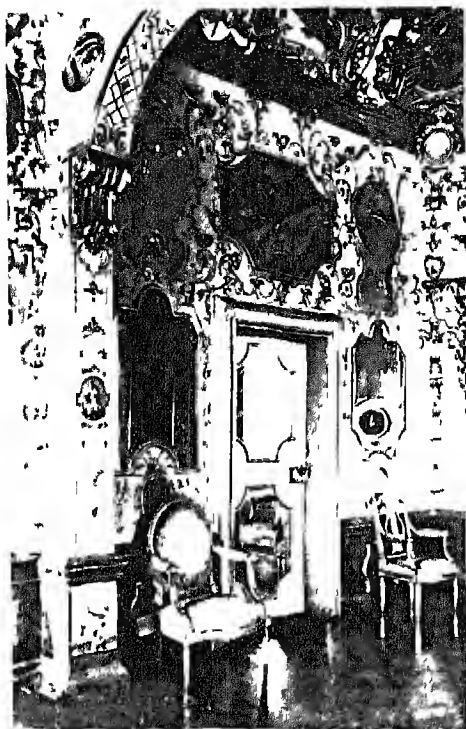
<sup>1</sup> Justus Kerner: *Das Bilderbuch aus meiner Knabenzeit*.

<sup>2</sup> Maubert de Gouvest: *La Pure Vertu* (1765). From the works of this author, a Dutchman by birth and employed at the Court of Württemberg, much valuable eye witness information can be extracted. Although this defrocked monk—a true rascal who, as d'Argenson writes in his *Mémoires*, 'finally stole the Duke's plate', is very picturesque in his accounts, his stories must be taken with a grain of salt.

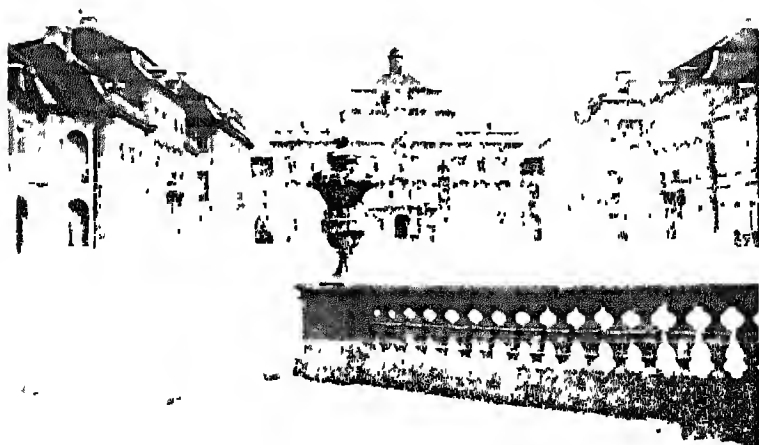
<sup>3</sup> Montesquieu: *Voyages*.



The Castle at Ludwigsburg about 1700, by A. G. von



The Castle at Ludwigsburg, (above) an interior and (below) the inner courtyard



## SCHLOSS LUDWIGSBURG AND LA FAVORITE

few coaches, the comings and goings of courtiers in garish uniforms, silk coats and bag wigs. The town even appeared 'beautiful and smiling' to Schiller who lived there in early childhood but who adds 'despite its resemblance to a princely residence one might be in the country' <sup>1</sup> Strangely enough most of the towns artificially created round a princely dwelling give an impression of emptiness and monotony. Even Versailles does not escape this failing, but it redeems itself to a certain extent by its noble and majestic layout. Ludwigsburg, possessing no such grandeur, merely evokes immeasurable boredom.

Friedrich-Ludwig was in such a hurry to take up his new quarters that he moved in even before the work was completed and gave his first masked ball.

He was thirty-five at the time. Already corpulent, he still looked the consummate courtier and, according to Pollnitz, was the best dancer of his age. He was a great hunter and sportsman. 'I have seen him,' adds the same author, 'drive an eight-in-hand without postillion and put them through their paces as though he were driving a single horse.' He was gallant, amorous and knew how to acquire genuine popularity by his cordial and friendly behaviour. Of all the eighteenth-century German princes he was probably the one who wished most ardently to follow in the wake of Louis XIV. In Ludwigsburg, which would prove ruinous for his country, he tried to reproduce the magnificence of that unique model, Versailles.

If we are to believe Pollnitz, the Court of Württemberg was for twenty years the most brilliant in Europe. These constant fêtes in the new palace, reported in all the European gazettes, consisted of balls at which the prince danced vigorously, suppers where, at their conclusion, this generous host distributed presents to the value of 50,000 florins, diversions in the gardens by the light of 100,000 fairy lights, and *hermeses* where ruler and subjects rubbed shoulders at fairground booths. On certain evenings the court gathered in the small wooden theatre, where a handful of French comedians in the pay of the Duke performed operas with a solemn splendour that aroused the admiration of the *Mercure de France*.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of Schiller to his friend Körner

Hunting remained Eberhard's favourite pastime. 'The Duke,' writes Keyser, 'has a passion for the chase and there is better hunting at Ludwigsburg than anywhere else in Germany. All the ducal houses are full of trophies with inscriptions showing who killed the stags.' The Abbé de Coulanges has left us a curious picture of a typical hunt in the country. 'The wild boars are herded into a precinct surrounded by toils. Large dogs are then unleashed into this enclosure to drive the boars towards the toils. The Duke killed a great number with his own hand (not very dangerous admittedly). The hunt lasted four hours.' The bag totalled seventy-six head of game, boars, does and stags, instead of the six or seven hundred which could have been expected had it been a good year for game. The Duke apologized to Coulanges for such a meagre result although the Frenchman was utterly disgusted by such butcheries.

The main figure at Ludwigsburg was the Gravenitz whose ever-increasing power was reaching its height. She knew the art of obtaining vast domains for herself. Schloss Freudenthal which the Duke had built for her,<sup>1</sup> Schloss Stetten in the vicinity of Ulm where the Dowager Duchess died in 1712, the lands of Urach, Goshem, Welzheim and Brenz.

The favourite distributed the best posts at court to her relatives. Her brother, the eldest member of the Gravenitz family, whom Pollnitz, always indulgent to adventurers 'in the money', describes as a 'handsome, polite and obliging man, as civil as his sister is imperious', obtained in succession the posts of Hofmarschall and first minister. Two more of her brothers received appointments, one was made a general, the other Grand Master of the Stables, one of her nephews became Hofmarschall and her brother-in-law Marshal of Travels. Offices, more numerous in Württemberg than in any other German court, were sold to the benefit of the favourite, with her genius for appropriation she also received the right to nominate bishops and to sign treaties. Finally she claimed the

<sup>1</sup> Freudenthal on the Neckar, near Bietigheim, built by Retzl and Frison in 1728, filled with furniture from Paris and Italy, was surrounded by gardens famous for their waterworks. The Gravenitz, who had a great predilection for this spot, later founded there a home for Jews. Today the castle is a lunatic asylum.



right- M<sup>re</sup> de Maintenon obtained the same from Louis XIV - to create a Privy Council composed entirely of members of her family, a council of which she and her brother the minister were presidents. All the affairs of state passed through their hands.

The Gravenitz insisted on taking precedence over all the members of the ducal family. On some days she kept to her couch feigning indisposition and insisting that the ladies visit her in gala costume. On others, all the courtiers had to file through her apartments observing the strictest possible etiquette. She also obtained the privilege that her name should be joined with that of the Duke in public prayers recited to invoke the blessing of heaven on the principality. The pastor Oslander was severely admonished for having insinuated that there was a clear allusion to the favourite in the Lord's Prayer - the words 'and deliver us from evil'.

Pollnitz, who visited Ludwigsburg at the moment when the Gravenitz was at the height of favour, describes her as 'enjoying all the rights of a sovereign. This imperious favourite is treated as royalty. At her residence she holds court, the duke gambles and takes his meals with her. She is now fifty and extremely powerful. She uses all possible aids to efface the ravages of nature from her face. Her mind is no more natural than her complexion, she is full of artifice and dissimulation. In a hurry to amass wealth, she insists that everyone shall quake before her. She is the repository of the duke's smile, woe to those who thwart her.'

The Gravenitz's star seemed to have reached its zenith when the news arrived of the death of her husband, old Count Wurben. The hope, once lost, of legally marrying the Duke suddenly seemed to be reborn, particularly since the neighbouring count of Montbehard had just furnished a resounding precedent for princely bigamy.<sup>1</sup> When the scandal which such a union would revive was mentioned to the Duke, he merely replied: 'I am Pope in my own country and I account to myself alone for my actions.' The operation however could never be brought to a favourable conclusion. The Gravenitz, deprived of the advice of her evil genius Frau von Ruth, who had recently died, committed certain indiscretions. At this particular period the Duke seems to have suspected his

<sup>1</sup> See Part III. "The County of Montbehard".

mistress of infidelity. Anonymous letters offered to name 'ten gentlemen of the court who had been extremely intimate with the Countess.' He ordered Baron Forstner, a friend of his youth and companion during his Paris visit, to keep a close watch on the private life of his mistress. 'I think,' he wrote to him one day, 'that I am being deceived and I want to have my eyes opened. But patience! I give you my word as a Prince that I will never forget your services. So long as I have bread to eat, you will not lack. Trust in me. Keep your eyes open. Warn me faithfully and call a spade a spade.' The Gravenitz dispelled the suspicions directed against her. By constant prayers and entreaties she obtained the banishment of the indiscreet Argus whose effigy was solemnly burnt in front of the whole court. Forstner fled to Strasbourg, then to Paris, with the intention of plotting revenge on the favourite. He sought protection from the Duchess of Orléans and persuaded her to plead his case in front of Louis XIV. The French King had just received a request from the Duke of Wurttemberg to extradite the fugitive, who was accused of having attempted the life of his sovereign. Louis XIV considered the matter tiresome and ordered the accused man to be arrested and sent to the Bastille. The Princess Palatine finally managed to convince the Royal Council of Forstner's innocence. He had merely tried to put an end to a scandalous liaison. Before the end of 1729 the wretched Baron was able to return to Wurttemberg and take an official post in Tübingen.

In 1725 Eberhard had to visit Montbéliard to take possession of the county of that name, an apanage of an extinct branch of the Wurttemberg line. The Gravenitz accompanied him and participated in the brilliant fêtes which were given for three weeks in honour of the new ruler. This was her ultimate triumph. As soon as the Duke returned to Ludwigsburg he fell ill. The favourite tended him with beverages whose recipes had been taken from witchcraft—strange concoctions which included the blood of a new born baby, the heart of a yellow hen, the entrails of a black cock, hairs from an old man's beard plucked at midnight, potions which were more in the nature of philtres than remedies.

The health of the Prince was not the favourite's only preoccupa-

tion. The misunderstandings which had arisen in her own family caused her grave anxiety. Her brother, the minister, growing more exacting each day, began to threaten her when lands and largesse which he considered his lawful due were discussed. 'He sometimes refuses to obey his sister.' says Pollnitz. 'The Duke spends his time patching up the quarrels between brother and sister.' Although irritated by this perpetual strife, Eberhard had not the courage to come to a decision. The Gravenitz, to put an end to these acrimonious discussions, unsuccessfully tried to banish this irascible brother whom she now accused of trying to dethrone her.

About the time these first symptoms of discord broke out between the favourite and her entourage, Friedrich-Wilhelm of Prussia, accompanied by his son, the future Frederick II, announced his visit to Ludwigsburg in August 1730. That this king disliked women and particularly the scandals they were capable of causing was well known. Thus it is not surprising that he was extremely insulting to the Gravenitz, who was kept away from all the festivities, balls and hunts given in his honour. With his customary bluntness the King reproached Eberhard for a liaison which put him under the thumb of an old woman. He persuaded him to break the spell which only dishonoured him and extorted a promise that he would repudiate his mistress. The Gravenitz, who had retired to La Favorite, waited in feverish impatience for a reply to the various notes she sent the Duke. This reply was eventually brought by an aide-de-camp, ordering her to return immediately to one of her estates. This was the classic dismissal, a catastrophe tempered only with the promise of an annual pension of 10,000 florins. At first the Countess could not believe that her power had crumbled and begged to be allowed to plead her own case before her pitiless judge, but she was told that Eberhard had left for Berlin as soon as he had signed the decree. A few days later it was rumoured that as the result of a heart attack on the journey he had been bled by a hastily summoned physician. Once more Wilhelmina had recourse to sorcery to repair her ruined fortunes. By bribing a servant with a few thalers she obtained a napkin stained with the blood of the sick

man, doubtless with magic practices in view. The Duke hearing of this manœuvre fell into a violent rage and gave orders that the napkin was to be confiscated immediately. The Gravenitz then received secret information the sick man had been forced to sign a decree by which, in exchange for an indemnity of 200,000 florins, the ex-mistress would leave Ludwigsburg, relinquish all her posts, abandon all her properties and return the engagement ring containing a lock of her lover's hair which it was feared would be put to nefarious uses. The sentence was countersigned by her brother, who remained first minister!

The favourite had to bow before the inevitable, she retired to Schloss Freudenthal. It was there that Colonel Streithorst burst into her bedroom one morning at the head of a handful of soldiers. He gave orders that she was to be 'dragged by the feet' from her bed. It was to no avail that the wretched woman played a scene of despair, she was flung into a carriage and taken to the fortress of Hohenasperg, a prison three-quarters of a league north of Ludwigsburg, and locked in a cell whose windows were heavily barred.

She soon learned that a commission had been appointed to prepare her trial. She was accused of witchcraft, infidelity to the Duke, abuse of power and the destruction of important political documents. No proof could be established of her witchcraft. Nevertheless she was still suspected of having constantly had recourse to necromancy to win and preserve the love of the sovereign.

Hohenasperg being considered too near to Ludwigsburg, the prisoner was transferred to the prison of Hohenmünch, where she was kept in the closest captivity. She was held there in secret, and only allowed to take short walks on the ramparts. The ageing favourite was transformed into an old woman. Her hair turned white and her beauty was now only a memory. At the lowest ebb of despair she was almost in a coma when she learned that she had been condemned to death. Vienna, however, quashed the sentence, insisting that a Countess of the Empire could not be executed. The death penalty was commuted to banishment for life.

The captive was still under lock and key when, in May 1732,

unexpected news arrived the Duke pardoned her on condition that she renounced all her territorial possessions, as well as all her offices and former rights. An escort of two hundred horsemen accompanied her to the frontier where a sum of 100,000 florins was handed to her as compensation for her immense losses. She took refuge once more in the little castle outside Schaffhausen, a present from the Duke of Zollern, where she had spent some happy days at the time of her growing favour, and where the old Count Wurben had become her husband.

The Gravenitz affair was closed and the mistress banished abroad. Eberhard-Ludwig, having salved his conscience, considered that the moment was ripe for a reconciliation with his wife.<sup>1</sup> But the Duke was not to enjoy the pleasures of family life for very long. At a ball given in Stuttgart in October 1730, the Crown Prince died from an attack of apoplexy.<sup>2</sup> Eberhard himself succumbed on the 31st October 1733 to heart disease, of which he had had ample warning. He died without posterity, despite the public prayers offered by his loving subjects who, excusing their sovereign, attributed all their misfortunes to the Gravenitz.

<sup>1</sup> It is said that this reconciliation was the work of a certain Countess Wilkenstein, who succeeded the Gravenitz as the Duke's mistress. In recognition of her services the new mistress was handsomely rewarded in the Duke's will.

<sup>2</sup> From his marriage with the daughter of a Margrave of Brandenburg he had a son, who died as a child, and a daughter who married in 1745, went mad and was in a convent in Berlin.

## Duke Karl-Alexander



The Wurttemberg succession fell to a collateral branch, represented at the time by Karl-Alexander, first cousin of Eberhard-Ludwig

This prince, who was born in 1684, had spent his childhood in Brussels and so had learned only to speak but not to write German. Entering Austrian service at the age of twelve, he later fought in Italy, the Low Countries, Hungary and Serbia under the orders of Prince Eugène, whose right arm he was considered to be. The victory of Peterwarden earned him a Golden Fleece, a field-marshal's baton, two imperial regiments and the governorship of Serbia with its capital, Belgrade. His military life had not, however, hindered his education as a gentleman, and he led a gay life one winter in Venice.<sup>1</sup> In Vienna he was on intimate terms with

<sup>1</sup> Venice was the scene of an adventure which proved that he was not lacking in a sense of humour. Some Venetian nobles had boasted in his presence of their traditions of culture and mocked the coarseness and ignorance of the Germans. The prince did not say a word but prepared his reply in secret. On the eve of his departure he gave a farewell supper-party followed by a little comedy whose theme he himself had suggested. The curtain rose on a street scene by night. In a dark corner stood the ghost of Cicero. A townsman appeared and knocked at his front door to be let in. He pulled out his watch and consulted it, then to while away the time he started to read a book. At last in the hope of rousing the porter from his sleep he fired a pistol shot. Cicero approached and asked to see the watch, the book and the pistol—all objects quite unknown to him. 'These are all things', said the townsman, 'which the barbarous Germans have invented. And what have you Italians produced?' At this moment a hawker arrived with his wares—a few strips of common linen—and the curtain fell. The allegory was too obvious to be missed by the audience. A few of the indignant guests were soon looking for their host to ask the meaning of this bravado—but the prince had disappeared.

the Vice-Chancellor of the Empire, Count Schönborn, Bishop of Würzburg, who initiated him into the mysteries of politics

Karl-Alexander, upon whom honours and remunerative posts had been heaped, always seemed to be short of money. His friend the bishop, tired of incessant calls on his purse, thought that only a rich marriage could rid him of this inveterate sponger. He contrived a match which combined all the requisite conditions. The lady in question was the beautiful, elegant, twenty-one-year-old Maria Augusta, only daughter of the Prince of Thurn and Taxis, master of all the posts of the Empire, and in consequence an immensely rich man. This alliance also brought an unexpected advantage to the Church: the Princess, being a Catholic, insisted that her husband should abjure the Protestant faith.

The marriage took place in 1727 in Ratisbon Cathedral. The day after the ceremony Karl-Alexander sailed with his wife down the Danube to Belgrade, to resume his duties as governor of the city.

In 1733 he had a sudden desire to stay for some time in the country of his birth, a luxury his wandering soldier's life had not so far allowed. Besides, was it not in his interests to make the acquaintance of a cousin who had just lost his only heir and whose eventual successor he could rightly consider himself to be? On his way to Stuttgart he heard of Eberhard's sudden death. Württemberg belonged to him.

Karl-Alexander was already fifty-three when he came to power. Camp life had made him boorish, violent and prone to drunkenness. Nevertheless he was not a bad man, amiable if not contradicted, and a cheerful companion at the supper table or on a hunt. As soon as he came into possession of his duchy he showed every intention of restoring the country's finances and inaugurating an era of strict economy. His first step was to get rid of the remains of the Gravenitz clique, which had been the cause of so much harm. The ex-favourite's brother was still in his post. Karl-Alexander had him arrested on charges of ingratitude towards his sister and complicity in the crimes of which she had been found guilty. To

escape being sent to prison the minister had to resign all his offices and to live at Tübingen under police surveillance <sup>1</sup>

The old favourite, before dying, was to see once more the scenes of her past glory. In 1740 she learned to her satisfaction of the death of Friedrich-Wilhelm, who had largely been responsible for her downfall. Quite wrongly, she imagined that his son, who had recently been crowned as Frederick II, would show her more consideration than his father had done and would help her to recover some of her lost fortune. Württemberg, which was forbidden her, lay on the road from Schaffhausen to Berlin. Convinced that no one would recognize the beauty of past days in the old traveller, she could not resist the urge to see her former domains. She drove to Ludwigsburg, now deserted and abandoned, and even to La Favorite, the charming setting of her royal idyll, where she had presided at so many gay festivities. The inviolate beauty of these places was indeed in contrast to the sad fate of the woman who had been their inspiration. Perhaps, from the fatigue of the journey or the emotion aroused by so many memories, the visitor was suddenly taken ill and reached Stuttgart only to be confined to bed. The following day she was found dead.

It was ordained that misfortune should dog the Duchy of Württemberg. The country had only freed itself from the domination of a sultan to succumb to the tyranny of a grand vizier. It became, throughout the reign of Karl-Alexander, the slave of a strange figure, Süss Oppenheimer, the prototype of a new generation of elegant Jews who, not content as in the past with amassing enormous wealth, now wished to figure in society and even to enjoy the satisfaction of power.

Born at Heidelberg in 1684, Süss, a proud, handsome young man, had been brought up at the ducal court of Wolfenbüttel,

<sup>1</sup> He eventually managed to regain his freedom, reached Vienna and tried unsuccessfully to protest against the treatment he had received. From Vienna he went to Prussia, where he was made lieutenant-general, and spent the last days of his life on one of his properties in Mecklenburg. He died at the age of seventy-six (1755) after being married five times.



where he assimilated the customs of high society. He then attended the University of Tübingen, acquired a knowledge of several languages and took his degrees in mathematics and jurisprudence. In addition to this he grew rich, as a result of fortunate speculation and from furnishing provisions to the armies dispatched by the Emperor to halt the progress of the Turks.

His concern with increasing his wealth had not distracted him from his boundless social ambitions. As a young man he formed attachments only with students of noble birth and later associated only with the great. At the age of fifty this elegant snob, always impeccably dressed, led *la vie galante* but limited his conquests to women of the highest rank. The Princess of Courland admitted him to her levée and even to her bath.

A meeting with Karl-Alexander decided his fate. One day Suss learned that the Prince was in residence at Schloss Wildbad near Ratisbon, paying court to his fiancée the Princess of Thurn and Taxis. As though by chance Suss settled in the neighbourhood, arranging to be presented to His Highness, whose confidence he soon won as a result of the useful advice he was able to give him. His presence was reported at Karl-Alexander's marriage. Then the young royal couple left for Belgrade and Suss lost sight of his new friends for some years. But as soon as Karl-Alexander took possession of his inheritance, Württemberg, the adventurer judged the time ripe to commence his big gamble. Selling his properties in Frankfurt and Mannheim, he settled in Stuttgart with a definite plan in mind—to flatter the Duke's vanity, to procure him money, soldiers and women, in other words glory and licence, two things which he knew appealed to the Prince.<sup>1</sup> He made it quite clear that once the master sat down to table the servant was entitled to pick up a few crumbs.

His first step was to procure a palace in the town which he furnished in a princely manner. The choicest dishes were served at his table, his maroon livery with silver buttons was soon famous,

<sup>1</sup> Among the women whom Suss brought to Karl-Alexander's bed was an opera singer, La Theresia, who on the death of the Duke had to return an incredible number of presents received from her lover—among other objects fifteen gold watches. She was a collector.

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his large staff included secretaries, librarians, heyducks and couriers. He won the reputation of being the most refined man in Wurttemberg. Suss wore an enormous diamond, a present from Karl-Alexander, and was generous to the women who accorded him their favours. He operated with swift cunning. Thanks to the establishment of conscription, he promptly procured for the prince the semblance of an army, of which the old warrior was very proud.<sup>1</sup> With the aid of most of the financiers of Europe, among whom he had placed his own paid men, he feverishly introduced a thousand ingenious if not always legal methods of furnishing the Duke with money to replenish the state coffers. The minting of specie was farmed out and the eleven million in base coinage which left the workshops in nine months were little better than counterfeit. Manufacturers who were declared bankrupt saw their factories seized and sold to the profit of the state. The tax on wealth was tripled; an 'emergency tax' was levied on foreigners who visited the country. Monopolies, sold to foreign companies, were introduced on coffee, beer, tobacco and groceries. Lotteries made their appearance. A special bureau of favours was created where posts were sold to the highest bidder, and a fiscal office where exemption from taxes could be bought. Justice became entirely corrupt and the winning of a case merely a question of money.

Although Suss's ambition was still very much alive it had not yet come out into the open. Since the Jews could hold no honorific titles he could not accept an official post. He remained invisible in the recesses of his palace, giving only rare audiences, but every day he held long secret sessions with the Duke, becoming his real councillor and playing the role of first minister. As the Gravenitz had done, he ruled Wurttemberg and his palace became the seat of government. He distributed all the offices of state to his minions. The Duke, a prey to some mysterious fascination, delivered himself blindly to Suss. He heaped presents on him and closed his eyes to the enormous profits his protégé drew from the

<sup>1</sup> From 1736 the standing army in Wurttemberg consisted of 10,000 infantry men, 2,000 cavalry and 100 hussars of the guard, an army whose sole duty was to defend the stags against ill-treatment from the peasants

reforms introduced into the country. He enjoyed the company of this man, who without any fanfare of publicity kept the most delightful mistresses. He even took the Duchess occasionally to visit the Jew. She appreciated the boundless submissiveness of the all-powerful favourite.

The incredible rise of this Jew, the son of an actor and a singer,<sup>1</sup> delighted his co-religionists. They did not fail to compare the career of his 'Israelitish Excellency' with the obscure destiny of his brother, who remained in Darmstadt and became a renegade, a Catholic convert, in order to acquire the title of Baron.

Public opinion, however, had been roused. In the country, again the victim of oppression, heavy storm-clouds piled up against the Jews. The science of amassing wealth which they alone understood, made them suspect and hated. This financial Moses worked miracles and brought gold into a country which had forgotten what it was—but at the cost of how much execration! Curses were already hurled at the supporters of the Suss party, threats were uttered at the gates of the ghetto, and shops were looted. These skirmishes foretold imminent war. An incident fired the spark. A factory worker, Dieterle, murdered a girl in particularly brutal yet mysterious circumstances. He managed to divert suspicion to a Jew, Seligmann, a former protégé of the Gravenitz. The trial which took place at Essling had great repercussions. Suss's Jewish friends made him bring the case before the Stuttgart tribunal which, entirely subservient to this important figure, ordered the release of Seligmann. This roused the entire Catholic party, headed by the Bishop of Wurzburg, against Suss. The Duke had two alternatives. Remembering that his marriage had been a bargain—had he not engaged to convert Wurttemberg on marrying the rich heiress of Thurn and Taxis?—he could deny Suss and perhaps see in the triumph of Catholicism an expiation of his

<sup>1</sup> Flatterers sought to discover a more illustrious origin for Suss. They credited him with being the bastard of a certain Baron Heydendorff, a well-bred adventurer who, after being decorated in the Turkish wars, was sentenced for abandoning the defence of Heidelberg and later pardoned by the Emperor. Suss, with great arrogance, refused to admit to such an origin. Disdaining to be an aristocrat's bastard, he was content to remain the First Jew of Germany.

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strange and invincible attraction to this Jew; or he could take the part of Suss against the Jesuits, who were ready to turn on him later should contrary interests demand it.

A young Württemberg princess was born at about the time that this offensive was launched against Suss. The Duke who, not without grounds, had accused his wife of having an affair with an Englishman, Lord Suffolk, agreed to a reconciliation on the occasion of this happy event. The baptism brought to Stuttgart a number of high dignitaries of the German clergy who joined forces with the Jesuit party and a few important Catholic officials—there were still some in the government—to make a direct attack on the detested favourite. Profiting by Suss's absence, the police entered his palace, seizing his ledgers and cash for the purpose of a judicial inquiry. Suss hurried back and had no great difficulty in confounding his accusers. Although he had returned of his own free will, he took this raid as a serious warning. Nevertheless he still considered that, as an indispensable collaborator and a repository of important secrets, his position was impregnable. But a dramatic event was soon to show him how unstable this position was.

Suss had a charming only daughter, Naomi. The Duke did not remain insensitive to her beauty, and secretly contrived to meet her one night in a small country house. The girl, to escape the pressing advances of her seducer, climbed up to the top storey and flung herself out of the window to her death.

Her father's despair turned to uncontrollable rage. His arrogance towards the Catholic party, which he blamed for his misfortune, knew no bounds. Ministers were treated by him like lackeys, his subordinates were humiliated, the people overburdened with crushing taxes. Destroying what he had built up with his own hands, Suss took a refined pleasure in pillaging the public treasury by deducting enormous commissions for past transactions. He sold jewels and worthless art treasures to the Duke at exorbitant prices. The atmosphere at his parties, which were more brilliant than ever, was embarrassing. The host adopted an intolerably haughty attitude towards his guests and not even the women were spared his sarcasm.

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Matters could not continue in this way for long. Everyone was waiting for the cup to overflow. Suss, in a fit of megalomania, brought about his own downfall. Thinking the time ripe to assert his authority and seeing the Catholic prelates as his sworn enemies, he persuaded Karl-Alexander to have them arrested. The Duke had planned a journey to Danzig to see a specialist about an old war wound, and on the evening of his departure he spent a pleasant and apparently carefree evening with Suss. Carnival was at its height. There was a fete and a concert, followed by a ball at the castle. On the 12th March 1757 the Duke set out and stopped at Ludwigshurg whose upkeep, for reasons of economy, he had neglected for some time. The following morning a courier brought him the news of events in Stuttgart, a hussar of the guard had discovered the plot against the officials, the *coup d'état* had failed and the town was in an uproar. Before midday the Duke was found lifeless in the famous Mirror Cabinet, which his predecessor had decorated for the Gravenitz.

The state archives are silent on the incidents of that morning and the causes of the Duke's death remain shrouded in mystery. The body bore no trace of a wound but bloodstains—they were still shown until 1850—were visible on the floor. Some maintained that he died of a seizure on hearing of the failure of the conspiracy, others insinuated that he had a stroke in the arms of a mistress. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the people, clinging to their love of the supernatural, were convinced that Karl-Alexander had been carried away by the devil.

# The Three Sons of Karl-Alexander



The dead man left three sons, the eldest of whom was a child of nine.<sup>1</sup> The Duchess was absent from Stuttgart on the death of her husband. Of a passionate nature and tired of the surveillance to which the dead prince had subjected her, she had left the country a year before and taken her children to her father's sumptuous palace in Brussels. There, at least, this princess whom the Margravine of Bayreuth called 'The Lais of her age' could live the free and untrammelled life which suited her and bring up her son in the French culture she loved so much. She hurried back to Stuttgart where, as the Duke had stipulated in his will, she was to share the Regency with Count Schonborn, Bishop of Wurzburg.<sup>2</sup>

The widow arrived in her capital to learn that the Wurtemberg Estates, determined to ignore the last wishes of Karl-Alexander, had already appointed Duke Karl-Rudolph, the uncle of the

<sup>1</sup> Karl-Alexander's three sons were all called Eugen in memory of Prince Eugène of Savoy, whom the Duke greatly admired.

<sup>2</sup> There was nothing surprising in this choice, the authority which Count Schonborn had retained over Karl-Alexander is well known. Karl-Alexander had continued to take advice from the Bishop, particularly on the subject of his sons' education. This is the curriculum suggested by the prelate. Rise at 6.30, half an hour's toilet, accompanied by prayers. From 9 to 11, work with a short break. High Mass at midday. A frugal meal at one o'clock. The afternoon was devoted to study and physical exercises. The children spent only one hour a day with their parents, dined at 7.30 and were in bed an hour later. They had to study their maternal language carefully, to know enough French and Italian to read, speak and write these languages, and enough Latin to learn religious history. They were to be given instruction on the details of their own family, to be taught civil and military architecture, the principles of philosophy, mathematics, law, morality, heraldry, etc.

deceased, as regent. This severe old Protestant, who until then had lived in retirement on his Neuenstadt estates, categorically refused to share the power with a bishop. He did, however, consent to collaborate with the Duchess, although she was a Catholic, but on condition that he should have the final say in the Council.

One of the first acts of the new master was to wind up the Süss case. On the news of the Duke's death the Jew had left his palace in terror by night and fled into the country alone and on foot. Some peasants recognized and arrested him. His return to Stuttgart was greeted with a storm of husses. The populace, intoxicated with happiness, were allowed to loot his palace and to persecute the co-religionists of the hated tyrant.

Süss, imprisoned in the dungeon of Hohenneuffen, was at first treated with some consideration. He was allowed to furnish his cell with his private furniture and to receive a few visits. An attempt was made to extract a general confession from him. He treated his judges with regal disdain and preserved an obstinate silence. Transferred to the fortress of Hohenasperg, Süss was chained in a cell and put on a diet of bread and water. He was indicted on a variety of charges: high treason, *lèse majesté*, offences against the state, ministers and individuals, and debasement of the currency. His sentence ordered the confiscation of his goods and the most infamous punishment of all—hanging. In vain the Jews offered an enormous ransom of half a million double ducats to save him.

On the 4th February 1738 the slow procession conducting Süss to the execution hill wound its way through Stuttgart. The condemned man walked slowly, wearing a scarlet robe. On his finger gleamed the famous diamond which, on the orders of the Regent, was to be buried with him. It was snowing heavily and the crowd of spectators was immense. Tall stands had been built to house more than six hundred court dignitaries. With a rope round his neck, Süss was placed in an iron cage 'in the form of a Chinese pavilion' and hoisted to the top of a very tall pole. The ship-knot finally did its work. All the Jews wept. The corpse remained for many months in its cage, according to an eye witness 'disap-

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pointing the hopes of the carmen crows' until only the bones were visible.

After the death of Karl-Rudolph in 1739 the Regency was continued by his cousin Frederick of Wurtemberg-Oels. A relatively happy period set in for the country. The era of economy returned. The high officials received then salaries, half in money, half in deliveries of wood, coal and corn. The troupes of French comedians were dismissed and the court now had only a small orchestra of rather badly paid musicians. Thanks to the drive of one of the privy councillors, Bilfinger,<sup>1</sup> who was promoted to the rank of first minister, Stuttgart took on a more modern appearance and one by one its wooden houses were replaced by stone buildings.

The Duchess eventually dismissed Bilfinger and for some time allowed herself to be entirely led by her confessor, a French cleric named Père Hyacinthe. For a time it was feared that Wurtemberg had passed from the hands of a Jew into those of a monk. The country however escaped this new domination and the Regent continued to govern alone, she refrained from playing any marked political role. According to a contemporary, 'she did a great deal of good and very little harm'. This was more than could have been expected. Moreover her love affairs preoccupied her more than affairs of government. She tried to introduce at her court the polite manners which the soldierly customs of her late husband had stifled and above all to encourage gallantry. Sophia Wilhelmina of Bayreuth, who visited her in July 1741, mentions in her *Mémoires* the Court of Wurtemberg which she found 'very boorish, full of ceremonies and compliments'. Not was she particularly pleased by the frivolous atmosphere reigning there, an offence to her irreproachable virtue. The Marquis d'Argens who stayed in Stuttgart for some time at the same period has left us his impressions of the Regent. 'I had

<sup>1</sup> Bilfinger was a famous mathematician, a military engineer, an expert in building fortifications and a professor of philosophy at the University of Tübingen. In this last capacity Eberhard had appointed him a privy councillor to the Grävenitz. Bilfinger now shared the government with August von Hardenburg.



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the honour to be presented to Her Highness, Madame la Duchesse, who was tutor to the three princes, her sons. This princess is very witty. She loves letters and those who cultivate them. She graced me with her protection and I entered her service as Chamberlain.<sup>1</sup> Actually the Duchess was greatly attracted by the wit of this Frenchman, whose Provencal hastiness she readily overlooked. It was soon an open secret that she nursed the most tender sentiments for him and even accorded him the ultimate favours. News of this scandal reached Berlin where Jordan, in a letter dated the 14th April 1742, brought to the notice of Frederick II 'the very violent dispute followed by a separation then a brilliant reconciliation which has just taken place between the lovers'. The scene had apparently been caused by jealousy. D'Argens refused to stay three more years in Stuttgart as he had been asked and intended to hasten his return to Berlin. 'Flinging himself at the Duchess's feet he implored her favour. This interview drew tears from those present. They still see each other but the atmosphere is deliberately cold.' In another letter to d'Argens, Jordan begs his friend to give a detailed account of the adventure to the King of Prussia, because 'it will not fail to amuse him'.<sup>2</sup> The Estates of Württemberg considered it prudent to remove the Crown Prince and his brothers from the tutelage of a mother who set such an unfortunate example of behaviour and at the same time gave them an education which was too Catholic and exclusively French. The

<sup>1</sup> D'Argens *Histoire de l'esprit humain*

<sup>2</sup> M. Blondel, a French diplomat who met the Princess at Frankfurt in 1734, wrote in one of his reports 'She likes to stay up and haunt the streets of Frankfurt all night with music. This is known as playing the buck and it infuriates the burghers who have been woken up.' One day the Princess, having decided to visit her country house, suggested that Blondel should drive her. On the journey she bantered in the most frivolous manner with her guest. 'We are under the greatest obligation to the princesses of France,' she said to him, 'for otherwise one would say "whores, like the princesses of Germany"'. Whereas now one says, "whores, like the princesses of France!"'. At this she began to relate the gallant adventures of Mlles de Cleimont, de Charolais, de Sens, de la Roche-sur-Yon and Mnie la Princesse de Conti. The diplomat, a trifle embarrassed by these confidences, extricated himself by saying that since he had been away from France for some time he was not *au courant* with these recent scandals. (MSS Württemberg, Foreign Affairs.)

King of Prussia suggested a solution the three boys should come officially to Berlin and complete their princely apprenticeship under his eyes. The Regency Council, nevertheless, proceeded rather cautiously before accepting the invitation. A decision such as this threatened to offend French susceptibilities. Wurttemberg had just acquired the County of Montbéliard and had every intention of keeping it. If therefore the Duchy wished to remain on good terms with France, the former owner of Montbéliard, she could not approve of Prussia taking a hand in the intellectual formation of the heir to the principality. A subterfuge enabled the Council to get out of this impasse. The princes would not go to Berlin with the object of receiving their education there, they would simply be ordered to carry out a tour of Germany during the course of which they would remain at the Court of Prussia for an indefinite period.

The itinerary of the travellers to Berlin entailed a halt at Bayreuth. At the castle of Elmitage three miles from the town the Crown Prince Karl-Eugen had occasion to meet Princess Frederica, daughter of the Margravine Sophia Wilhelmina, the author of the famous memoirs. At their first meeting a mutual sympathy bordering upon tenderness was born between the two children aged fourteen and nine respectively. Frederick II did not fail to notice this infatuation and on the 28th December 1741, the day after his pupils arrived in Berlin, he wrote to his sister in Bayreuth: 'The three Wurttemberg princes have arrived. I am pleased to say that they speak in glowing terms of their visit to Bayreuth and in particular of the little princess [Frederica] who, I feel, has inspired in them more than mere feelings of respect. The three princes are pleasant well-behaved children, whose conversation is far in advance of their years.'

Towards the close of 1742, the Duchess of Wurttemberg decided to join her sons in Berlin. There is a mention of her passage through Bayreuth in the memoirs of the Margravine:

'The Duchess of Wurttemberg has decided to visit Bayreuth. This somewhat notorious princess is on her way to Berlin to see her sons whose education she has entrusted to the King. The

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young princes were here just recently. The Duke fell in love with my daughter who is only nine and we were highly amused at his little gallantries. I found the Princess well preserved [she was then only thirty-five!]. Her features are fine but her complexion is raddled and very yellow. She has an oral flux which imposes silence on her audience. Her voice is so shrill and power ful that she deafens one; she is witty and lucid. Her manners are engaging to those whom she wishes to win and she is very free with the men. Her outlook and behaviour range from haughtiness to baseness. Her flirtations have discredited her so much that her visit gave me no pleasure.'

The Duchess spent a fortnight in Bayreuth, it was long enough to revolutionize the peaceful court of this small capital. She quickly persuaded those around her that manners and decency had become outmoded in Württemberg and Bayreuth was soon infected. 'They took a pride,' continues the Margravine, 'in fighting, throwing napkins at each other, stampeding like wild horses and embracing to the refrain of certain highly equivocal songs. These manners were very far removed from those of French ladies and I think that had a Frenchman appeared he would have thought himself in the company of opera singers or actresses.'

In Berlin the Duchess continued to furnish material for the *Chronique scandaleuse*. Bielfeld, who met her there in 1743, relates that he was received by the 'gallant Duchess', as he calls her. She was in bed in a flimsy negligé, surrounded by a mountain of cushions trimmed with *point d'Alençon* and green-and-gold ribbons. She gave charming and very amusing supper parties at which the champagne flowed. She would tolerate no etiquette and 'one would never have thought that one was at a princess's table.'

The Duchess began an affair with a certain Baron Montolieu. This son of a well-born Languedoc Protestant, now a refugee in Berlin, knew how to charm the susceptible Duchess. M. le Baron was 'amiable, a good though loquacious conversationalist, a writer who could recite pleasant little tales, hold his own with gentlemen of letters but had too much taste for pleasures and too little for economy'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Maubert *La Pure Verté*  
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## THE DUCHY OF WURTTENBERG

The relations between Frederick II and the Duchess do not seem to have been cordial. The King took umbrage on hearing rumours that the Regent suddenly wished her children to continue their education in Vienna. Voltane had an opportunity of meeting the capricious lady during this visit.

'She is in Berlin,' he wrote, 'to parley with the King of Prussia. I found her in tears. "Ah," she cried, "does the King of Prussia wish to be a tyrant? In return for having entrusted my children to him and given him two regiments, does he want to force me to demand justice from the whole world against him? I want my son. I do not want him to go to Vienna. I want him to be educated in his own country near me. The King of Prussia libels me when he says that I want to hand over my son to the Austrians. You know that I love France and that on my son's majority I plan to spend the rest of my days there."'<sup>1</sup>

This quarrel was easily patched up since it was not in Frederick II's interests to exacerbate the discussions. His sole object was to keep the young princes at his court and to supervise their education, which he had entrusted to a Frenchman, Desprès, a bosom friend of the Marquis de Valois, the French attaché in Berlin. The King did his best to win the love of the young princes. He gave them a miniature court, M de Montoheu, their mother's lover, was attached to them as *Officier de Suite*. Unfortunately he instilled into them a taste for extravagance and licence. Escorted by this rather strange mentor the princes frequented the new opera in Berlin which had been completed in 1742 by Knobelsdorf, they visited the new wing of Schloss Charlottenburg, decorated with the canvases of Pesue, and admired the splendours of Potsdam recently enriched by masterpieces of French art. To give the heir to Wurttemberg a precocious taste for soldiering the King promoted him to major at seventeen – an unprecedented honour – and presented him with some richly harnessed horses.

Frederick II, who had great hopes of a marriage between the Wurttemberg heir and his niece from Bayreuth, summoned the latter to Berlin. To his great satisfaction he realized that the pro-

<sup>1</sup> Letter to M. Amelot, 3rd October 1743.

posed marriage was progressing along the right path. The young people hardly left each other and enjoyed making music, dancing and riding together. Karl-Eugen no longer bothered to hide the fact that he was in love with Friederica. When the girl left he wrote her letters full of gallantry and even a few passionate verses of his own.

Frederick II at last gave Karl-Eugen permission to leave his court but only after making certain that he intended to marry the little Bayreuth princess. To give weight to this engagement he solemnly proclaimed the young man's majority on the 7th January 1744.

After three years spent in the Prussian school the princes left Berlin on the 8th February 1744. The eldest took with him a sealed envelope which he was not to open until he had left the capital. Dated the 6th February it contained a tiny work written in French by the King for the man whom he already considered as his nephew. It bore the title *Le Miroir du Prince ou Instructions du Roi pour le jeune duc Charles-Eugène de Wurtemberg*, and comprised a rule of life and advice on government. In later life the recipient was to profit little by this counsel.

'Do not imagine,' wrote the King, 'that the land of Wurtemberg was made for you but consider rather that Providence brought you into the world to make your people happy. Always prefer their good to your pleasures. Since Wurtemberg lies between France and Austria, these two powerful neighbours must constantly be held at arm's length with no predilection being shown for either. Avoid flatterers and punish intrigues, profit by your youth but do not abuse it. Enjoy several years of pleasure before you think of marrying. The first ardour of youth is never happy for Hymen, and constancy thinks it is in its dotage when it has lasted for three years. Do not take a wife from too great a house which might consider the marriage beneath it etc.'

Towards the end of February 1744 Karl-Eugen returned to Bayreuth. The Margravine Sophia Wilhelmina wrote to the King her brother on the 22nd of the same month.

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'The Duke [of Wurttemberg] has just become betrothed to Frederica I did not want to deprive you of this good news since it is to you alone, my dear brother, that I owe it, your cares and kindness have brought things to this point The Duke seems very much in love and pleased with his lot The Duchess of Wurttemberg is delighted, she has behaved very intelligently throughout this time and has completely won her son's heart All this has caused quite a stir, for the young lover is very bashful and everything has been arranged without ceremony'

The Margravine may have shown more indulgence this time for the Duchess but she still made prudent reservations as far as she was concerned

'The marriage of our children has been approved by Berlin. This alliance forces me to be on friendly terms with this princess in spite of myself I say forces, because this woman was so greatly disparaged that she was referred to as "another Lais". The Duchess is plausible, has a pretty wit which is amusing for a time but boring in the long run Her gaiety is almost invariably inmodest. Her principal aim being to please, she goes to any lengths to achieve this end—flirting, infantile behaviour, winking, in fact the whole gamut of coquetry is brought into play'<sup>1</sup>

In consideration of the age of the young couple, the two families agreed to postpone the marriage. This respite conformed to the suggestions of Frederick II that Karl-Eugen should wait until the first fires of his youth had died. Moreover the moment seemed propitious for the heir to undertake the traditional 'Knight's Tour' of Europe

The two youngest princes travelled under the name of Counts of Groningen and, preceding their elder brother, arrived in Paris in July 1747. They went to Versailles where the fountains were played in their honour and on the 10th April were presented to the King 'without ceremony', since they were not reigning princes, on the 15th to the Queen 'at her toilet', to the royal family, and finally to Madame de Pompadour, whose star was at

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the Margravine of Bayreuth*

its zenith at the time. They sailed in the royal gondolas on the Grand Canal, visited the Trianon and the Menagerie, and went as far as Marly. After a few months spent in visiting the various provinces of France, they returned to Paris in April 1748 and lived in the Hôtel de Bonac,<sup>1</sup> 'Rue de Grenelle, Saint-Germain, près des Carmélites'. Their elder brother Karl-Eugen, accompanied by his inseparable Montolieu, joined them on the 21st June. Barbier notes in his journal 'He has come to thank Louis XV for having declared the two sons of Prince Montbéliard-Sponeck bastards.'<sup>2</sup> The real object of the journey, however, was to enjoy himself. The young prince actually went every evening to the gaming-rooms and haunted the theatre wings.<sup>3</sup> He spent so extravagantly that he often had recourse to moneylenders, his love of luxury drove him to excess. 'His head filled by Baron de Montolieu with ideas of grandeur, he wanted to give a magnificent reception at the Opéra. He sent everyone tickets, with the result that there were so many people that no one could see anything.'<sup>4</sup>

The princes left Paris in the middle of July. The Crown Prince had only spent four months in France but that short stay was enough to inflame the francophile sentiments his mother had encouraged in him as a child. In his eyes nothing was comparable to French culture and art, nothing more admirable than the fêtes given at the French court or the ballets performed at the Opéra.

<sup>1</sup> Today No. 118 Rue de Grenelle.

<sup>2</sup> For details of this see Part III, *The County of Montbéliard*.

<sup>3</sup> 'Voltaire, being at the theatre one day, expressed his antipathy for the atmosphere at Versailles in the presence of Karl-Eugen. "But", asked the prince, "do you never go and pay your respects to your king?" "Ma foi, mon prince," replied Voltaire, "I must confess I never go there. One can only see the King at his *petit lever*. That man [what a way to speak of a king in the foyer of a theatre!] rises sometimes at ten o'clock, sometimes at two o'clock and another time at midday. You can never be sure. I said to him: Sire, when your Majesty wants to see me perhaps you will be good enough to send for me." Had it been anyone else than Dutastre [a friend of Colle's] who told me this from hearsay, I should not have believed it true because it sounded so incredible. Could anyone who possessed such a wit be so stupid?" (Colle *Memoires et Journaux*)

<sup>4</sup> Maubert, *La Pure Venité*.

Completely captivated by the King's chamber music, he realized how boring were the interminable flute *solis* he had heard at Frederick II's court at Potsdam. The young man was so influenced by the French that for twenty years, taking Louis XV as his model, he imitated the splendour of Versailles first at Stuttgart and later at Ludwigsburg.

The day of the marriage having dawned, Karl-Eugen joined his fiancée at Bayreuth in September 1749. The Prince was just twenty. He had,

'those noble and gracious airs which distinguish princes from their subjects and even from their courtiers. He has frank blue eyes and can be very gracious when he wishes. Despite his ugly teeth he has an agreeable laugh and a gentle smile. He is tall and well proportioned. There is a natural ease in all his movements which he occasionally spoils by an arrogance which most of our German princes take for gravity and believe to be suited to the dignity of their rank. He is an excellent horseman and dances with grace as a prince should dance. He loves the arts, plays very well on the harpsichord and has a fine ear for music.'<sup>1</sup>

These elegant manners made up for the young man's lack of education. He was at some pains to hide his ignorance by a few brilliant flashes of wit. 'Despite the little he knows, he gives an impression of being cultured, he speaks and writes German, Italian and French.'<sup>2</sup> He was exceedingly restless. For more than twenty years, as he himself confessed, his life was to be a furious *Lebensgalopade*. With heavy humour he enjoyed the type of pranks played by pages or students. He roamed the streets at night, knocking at the doors to wake up the householders. During a ball it would amuse him to lock all the doors and keep his guests prisoner until the following morning. Later he was to admit that in his youth he had been 'a devil full of vices', but Maubert considered 'that if he became a debauched prince it was the fault of his masters and the courtiers of his youth'. Until the age of twenty these defects hardly came to light. At the outset Frederick

<sup>1</sup> Maubert, *op cit*

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*



II pretended to see in him what Mazarin had seen in Louis XIV --- 'the makings of a great man' His perspicacity soon made him realize the true nature of his pupil 'He will fall a prey to servile adulation and dangerous seducers!' Frederick wrote in 1747 'Great only in small things and small in great ones'

Frederica of Bayreuth was a pretty child with regular features, a trifle cold, who had inherited beauty from her famous mother. Endowed with great intelligence and wit, and carefully educated, she was to become, according to Casanova, 'one of the most accomplished princesses in Germany' This marriage into the family of Bayreuth gave Karl-Eugen great political advantages since it brought him into the powerful house of Prussia, and for Württemberg it was a pledge of reconciliation with the Protestant countries

On the 18th September 1748, Karl-Eugen made his entrance into Bayreuth His carriage, drawn by six white horses, had cost no less than 24,000 florins and among his escort of fifty-three could be seen the Princes Heinrich and Ferdinand, brothers of the King of Prussia The contract was signed and the marriage took place on the 26th The bridegroom wore a coat of silver brocade with gold flowers encrusted with diamonds At the end of the ceremony the young couple presided at a gala repast Twenty dinner services were used and toasts were drunk to the seven princes and princesses united round the table as well as to the absent members of both families. During the ball that followed, in accordance with an ancient Prussian custom the guests performed the Dance of the Torches.<sup>1</sup> Then to the din of salvoes from

<sup>1</sup> Biefeld gives us details of this famous dance, a rite performed at all the marriages of the family of Prussia In his *Lettres familières*, he describes the wedding of the future Frederick II 'The newly married couple opened the dance, made the tour of the hall, bowing to the king and the company They were preceded by the Ministers and the Generals marching in twos with lighted torches The Princess then took the King and the Prince the Queen as partners The King gave his arm to the Queen Mother, the reigning Queen Prince Henry, and eventually all the princes and princesses present at the fete were taken according to their rank, making the tour of the hall and dancing a kind of polonaise . The strange gravity of the dance, the turns performed languidly by the illustrious dancers, the torches preceding them each time

## THE DUCHY OF WURTTEMBERG

the cannon the married couple retired to their apartments, while outside the palace the crowd gorged its fill of oxen, stags and sheep, and slaked its thirst from casks of wine and beer.<sup>1</sup>

to the deafening fanfare of the trumpets, were all a little too reminiscent of the dances the Sarinians once made our countrymen dance in their vast forests '

<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of this wedding was published at Jena in 1749

## The Neues Schloss at Stuttgart



The young couple left Bayreuth on the 27th September, reaching Wurttemberg three days later. After driving beneath a series of triumphal arches they reached Ludwigsburg on the 5th October, where a fête awaited them including a hunt, a military review, a performance of *Andromache* and the illumination of La Favorite. At last, on the 11th, Frederica appeared in Stuttgart 'displaying all the graces of womanhood added to those of beauty'.<sup>1</sup> At the outset the couple behaved towards each other like eager tender lovers. The Duke was most attentive. When his duties kept him from home or he was absent hunting for several days, he sent a little love-letter each evening by one of his hussars. Knowing that his wife was very enamoured of the theatre and had ambitions to appear on the boards, he allowed her to take lessons in diction and transformed the ancient theatre of Stuttgart into a charming opera house. It was opened on the 30th August 1750 on the occasion of her birthday.

From the very first months of her stay in Wurttemberg, Frederica won the hearts of her subjects. She may have been reproached for a certain haughtiness she had displayed on her entrance into the capital when some pretty Stuttgart girls disguised as harvesters, after strewing flowers beneath her horses, tried to approach and kiss her hand she drew back and cried 'What do these silly geese want of me?' But since there was soon evidence that she would present the country with an heir, all resentment against her vanished. In February 1750, instead of a hoped-for prince, a princess was born who only survived a few

<sup>1</sup> Maubert *La Pure Férité*

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days. Frederica, overcome with grief, returned to her family in Bayreuth for consolation before rejoining her husband.

As soon as Karl-Eugen came to power he wished to profit by the experience he imagined that he had acquired on his travels. He dismissed all the ministers whom the Regent had appointed and let it be understood that he would personally assume the reins of government. In an attempt to prove that he was not frightened of hard work, he spent many a late night fortifying himself with coffee.<sup>1</sup>

Casanova maintains that on awakening in the morning the prince was flung into a cold bath. As soon as he was dressed he sent for his assistants, dealt in haste with current affairs and then ordered the first petitioner to be brought in. 'Nothing was more droll than the audiences he gave to his poor subjects. They were often coarse peasants or the meanest workers, the poor man would sweat, try to speak intelligibly, which he did not always succeed in doing, and often he left terrified, desperate and furious. As for the pretty peasant girls, he listened to their complaints *tête-à-tête* and although he rarely granted their requests, they left his cabinet consoled.'<sup>2</sup>

While Karl-Eugen tried to give the impression of being an overworked sovereign, he insisted at the same time upon playing at soldiers. In fact, this military folly had taken hold of him while he was in Berlin. He decided to raise his peace-time army from 6,000 to 17,000 men, a rather high figure for a country of 600,000 inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

In 1758, therefore, he issued a decree by which the Württembergers, 'who lead an idle and dissolute life', were obliged either to serve themselves, to furnish two recruits or to buy exemption with a sum ranging between 50 and 100 florins. The favourite

<sup>1</sup> The signs of over-exertion which the prince showed were not entirely due to work. He instituted heavy drinking bouts, according to Keysler, attended by five or six of his councillors who 'daily absorbed ten jugs of burgundy'.

<sup>2</sup> Casanova *Mémoires*

<sup>3</sup> In 1752 Karl-Eugen signed a treaty with France guaranteeing the upkeep of 6,000 infantrymen for which in peace-time he was to receive 63,000 francs and in war-time 78,000 francs.

## THE NEUES SCHLOSS AT STUTTGART

minister at this time, Riegler, organized round-ups in the country for the purpose of raising new contingents. The press gang visited the peasants at their ploughs and tempted them with the offer of high pay and a smart uniform. In order to imitate the King of Prussia as faithfully as possible, the Duke presented his soldiers with magnificent equipment and drilled them so severely that the English traveller Burney compared them to clocks. 'Never has such mechanized precision been seen in human beings. It is possible that the inventor of the Machine-Man took his ideas from these automata. They look quite terrifying. Black moustaches,<sup>1</sup> white powdered wigs with as many as six curls on each side, blue tunics, patched with much skill and care—this is their rig.' The grenadiers wore as head-gear a monument in the shape of a pointed sugar-loaf, to preserve the balance of which a chin-strap was needed. For this reason, a contemporary relates, they had to march 'with lowered heads like rams.' The soldiers' thighs were so tightly encased in their breeches that it was impossible for them to get up if they fell, to retrieve their head-gear or to button their gaiters except by using a long iron button-hook. These gaiters were actually 'lined with two pieces of cardboard, one placed at the knee, forcing the man to keep his calf tense, the other giving him a plump, shapely leg. When the officers were invited to sit down, they had to twist their arms, seize the chair, lift it until it touched their backsides, then at the risk of breaking their feet, let themselves fall with it, their calves as taut as though they were epileptics.'<sup>2</sup>

This comic-opera army was commanded by eighteen generals, twenty-two colonels and so many lieutenants that, according to Burney, 'one met only officers in the streets.' The Württemberg soldiers merely served as puppets for military parades and in particular for the famous *Lustlager*. Karl-Eugen had copied these from Dresden and they were really only fashionable parties in disguise. Created to satisfy the self-esteem of the young prince,

<sup>1</sup> The regulation colour of these moustaches was black, even if it clashed with the colour of the man's hair. When their growth was not considered to be fast enough, the soldier had to use false moustaches.

<sup>2</sup> Maubert op cit

the army never did him great honour. On the battlefields of the Seven Years War it lacked initiative and discipline and, to quote Casanova, 'was only distinguished by its blunders' <sup>1</sup>

Karl-Eugen soon gave ample proof that he had inherited from his father that 'mania for building' which Montesquieu recorded — a passion possessed by few German princes to such a marked degree. In his case it was to last until the end of his life. French taste was predominant in all the architectural ventures he sponsored.

The Altes Schloss, old-fashioned and devoid of comfort, was far removed from his Versailles ideal. At first Karl-Eugen thought of enlarging it. Then, abandoning this idea towards the end of 1744, he ordered plans for a new palace from Leopoldo Retti who had worked on the building of Ludwigsburg <sup>2</sup>

He gave him instructions to suggest Versailles in all the façades and to arrange the distribution of the rooms on French lines. He had good reasons for approaching Retti who, although an Italian by birth, had been educated entirely in the French school of architecture. However, to be doubly sure, he sent the artist to Paris to study for a few months with Le Blond. The modest credit of 600,000 florins opened for Retti showed the intention of banning any superfluous luxury from the new building. The future was to prove the vanity of this attempted economy.

Karl-Eugen decided that his new dwelling should be a few hundred yards away from the old. The site chosen below the town, with an unrestricted view, was the one occupied by the garden of the charming Lusthaus, a spot famous for its artificial grottoes and the rendezvous of archers. <sup>3</sup> The Lusthaus was pulled down with the

<sup>1</sup> Although discipline was lax in the Württemberg army, it was not for lack of punishment. People spoke in horror of a particular kind of flogging which was considered harsher than death. The soldier was made to run the gauntlet between two ranks composed of 1,000 men and was beaten with canes as he passed. The Duke always honoured these occasions with his presence and urged on his soldiers by promising them double rations of wine. Men often died under the blows.

<sup>2</sup> In 1740 Retti had built the beautiful barracks in Stuttgart.

<sup>3</sup> We still have the drawings from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of the Lusthaus, a tall-roofed pavilion built in the Renaissance. Apart from a few restorations it had preserved its primitive form until 1745.

## THE NEUES SCHLOSS AT STUTTGART

exception of the theatre which, incorporated in the new palace, was to serve as a *Salle de Spectacle*

On the 3rd September 1746, the first stone of the Schloss was laid in the presence of the whole court <sup>1</sup> Hardly had the lower foundations been dug than a layer of water was found. Borings had to be made to a depth of 25 feet to set the building on a solid base. In spite of these difficulties the work went ahead at full speed. On the building site, where shifts worked night and day, Retti had hoped to have only French workmen whose unrivalled skill he appreciated. For economic reasons, and also as a result of a local protest, German labour was employed. Retti soon noticed certain differences of opinion between himself and the German architects who had become his collaborators <sup>2</sup> Often called away to superintend other works, he left Stuttgart for some time before even completing his final plans. In 1747, Karl-Eugen thought of replacing him by Bibiena, at that time Director of Buildings to the Elector Palatine, then by Balthazar Neumann, who was invited to produce drawings of the façades <sup>3</sup> Despite these vacillations the Prince retained his confidence in Retti, who resumed his work at Stuttgart after another journey to Paris to study particularly the art of interior decoration. In 1750 he finished the main block, the garden wing, and began on the town wing, which was not to be finished for another four years.

Retti did not see his work completed, he died the following year at the age of forty-seven. Before his death he appointed his own successor and advised the prince to give the post of Director of Buildings to La Guépière, a French architect he had met in Paris, whom he knew to be unemployed. La Guépière has recorded in the following lines taken from the preface of his *Recueil d'Esquisses d'Architectures* the considerable part he played in the

<sup>1</sup> In Germany popular superstition insisted that a cavity hollowed in the foundation stone should conceal wine, fruit and water. It was believed that were this done the house would never lack these three essentials of life.

<sup>2</sup> At the period when Retti built the Schloss his principal collaborator was the Württemberg Director of Buildings, Major von Leger, whose advice Karl-Eugen sought when building Monrepos.

<sup>3</sup> Neumann's magnificent plans are preserved in the Königl. Technische Hochschule in Stuttgart.

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continuation of the Schloss<sup>1</sup> 'I furnish at the end sketches, plans, cross-sections and elevations of the palace I am building at Stuttgart, the capital of the Duchy of Wurtemberg. This great building was begun from the plans of different architects. The immense changes I have made in the distribution of the parts already built, what I have restored, the left wing, which I entirely rebuilt, as well as all the staircases . . . etc.' To sum up, La Guépière during the seventeen years he stayed at Stuttgart built in the purest French tradition the entire left wing of the Schloss, the Staircase of Honour, the Great Gallery, the Assembly Hall, the Library and the *Salle de Spectacle*. He improved the main façade on to the entrance courtyard by adding an elegant central porch with dome columns surmounted by a balcony, a second storey pierced with rounded windows and a pediment to crown the whole.<sup>2</sup>

This vast monument, apart from a few almost imperceptible traces of Italian influence, was so utterly French in character that the German, Gurlitt, in agreement with all his art-historian colleagues, was forced to admit 'All national character is completely effaced, the forms are those of the buildings of Paris. Nothing in this palace would indicate that it stood on German soil.'

To decorate the 365 rooms of the Schloss, Karl-Eugen, one of the most francophile princes of his age, summoned a whole French staff. The local artisans who wished to collaborate in the enterprise had to spend a period in some Parisian workshop. Nicholas Gubal,<sup>3</sup> accredited painter-decorator to the prince, was com-

<sup>1</sup> La Guépière dedicated this work in 1758 to the Marquis de Marigny. Prefaced by an engraved portrait of the author, it was printed the following year in Stuttgart. The artist was never able to carry out his plan of publishing in sixty plates a reproduction 'of the great staircase, the Marble Hall, the Galerie des Glaces, etc.' which he had executed (*Vide the Bulletin de la Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts et des Départements*, vol. 25, 1900).

<sup>2</sup> The dome which rises above the main building dates only from 1760. The gilt crown set on an enormous stone cushion at the top of this dome, was placed there in 1807 to proclaim that the ruler of Wurtemberg had recently changed his ancient title of Duke for that of King.

<sup>3</sup> Gubal (1725-84) came from Nîmes and was the son of a poor Luneville architect who built the famous railings and fountains of the Place Stanislas in Nancy. He abandoned sculpture for painting and in 1740 became a pupil of Natone in Paris. He was typical of those vagabond



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missioned for the four great ceilings to the Staircase of Honour, the dining-hall and the two rooms in the garden wing (destroyed in the fire of 1765). Lejeune, a Fleming quite French in outlook, became first sculptor to the court.<sup>1</sup> The important commissions given to Falconnet by Karl-Eugen were never fulfilled because the Duke waived his rights to them in favour of Catherine the Great. From France came other sculptors, Michel Fressancourt (Paris 1700-64), Roger,<sup>2</sup> the designers Dupuis and Bourgeois, the

artists who lined their services to the highest bidder. He was summoned to Bayreuth in 1748 and in the following year to Stuttgart to decorate the interior of the hall of the Lusthaus. Karl Eugen sent him to Rome where he joined Raphael Mengs and became enamoured of classicism. In 1760 he was appointed Court painter and director of the Württemberg Academy of Painting. At the instigation of Pigage, the Elector Palatine sent him to decorate the *ambulatory* of the theatre and the *Pavillon des Bains* at Schwetzingen. Traces will be found of his various journeys to Paris in the diary of the engraver Wille, whose workshop he frequented in 1760, and in the *Memoirs* of Mme Roland, who writes 'I remember a painter named Guibal who has lived for some time at Stuttgart whose homage to Poussin—crowned by the Academy of Rome, I saw some years ago. He often visited my father. He was a funny fellow who told me fairy tales I have never forgotten and which amused me very much. He enjoyed seeing how much I knew. I can still see him with his rather grotesque face sitting in a chair taking me between his knees against which I leant my elbows.' Guibal died in Stuttgart leaving behind him an important library and a collection of old masters. The Kupferstich Kabinet of the town preserves some of his drawings in the manner of his teacher Natoire.

<sup>1</sup> Pierre François Lejeune—born in Brussels in 1721, designer of Cardinal de la Tremoille's tomb in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi at Rome—was appointed teacher at the Stuttgart School of Fine Arts. We owe to him among other works the two figures of Hercules and Minerva which flank the main entrance of the Schloss and the statue of Karl-Eugen, which a German author quoted by L. Reau considers 'the finest example of this French type of state portrait in roman costume'. This statue, decorated with allegorical bas-reliefs from Guibal's designs, and with a plinth by the German architect Fischer, was placed in 1780 in the Court of the Stuttgart Academy. Lejeune executed a marble bust of Voltaire 'which Monseigneur placed in his Cabinet' and produced numerous models for the manufacture of Ludwigsburg porcelain.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Roger of French extraction but born in Hanover. Works decoration of the main façade and the left wing of the Stuttgart Schloss, woodcarving and stucco in the interior of this Schloss (1752-62), decoration of the façade of Monrepos near Ludwigsburg, in collaboration with the German, Sauer.

smelter Didier de Metz, the engraver Alexis Bruzon, etc. German art was represented by a few sculptors such as Bayer and J. P. Holzer; Italian art by the brothers Bossi, members of a family of artists distributed throughout Germany who remained past-masters in stucco work.<sup>1</sup>

During the nineteenth century the interior of the Neues Schloss underwent extensive modifications. They only accentuated the impression of solemn yet flound luxury which emanated from the building. After 1807 King Frederick handed over the building to his favourite architect Thouret, who swamped the apartments in a profusion of marble and porphyry, malachite and lapis-lazuli, destroying much of the old decorations which bore the hallmark of French taste. Nevertheless the Staircase of Honour remained almost intact with its partitions, columns of marble and its Gaiabal ceiling (Aurora leaving Venus for the pleasures of the hunt). The old dining-hall with an allegorical ceiling by the same artist, the White Hall, and the Hall of Mirrors formed a majestic ensemble. Here and there were interesting portraits of members of the Württemberg, Prussian and Bayreuth families, and there were also some remarkably fine pieces of Louis XV and Louis XVI furniture. One of the castle wings contained a library with its famous collection of 6,000 bibles in all languages as the *pièce de résistance*. It had been formed mainly at the expense of the Württemberg monasteries.<sup>2</sup>

In the precincts of the castle were monumental stables inspired by those of Chantilly which the architect Jean Aubert had completed in 1735. And finally the vast gardens included the Court Farm, a kind of Trianon whose salon served for balls and rustic diversions, and the menagerie—reminder of Versailles where monkeys lived side by side with elephants.

<sup>1</sup> They were, however, helped by a few German stucco workers such as Sonnenschein and Adam Bauer. In the latter's workshop Dannecker, a sculptor of great repute in Germany, was to learn his trade. A pupil of Pajou between 1783 and 1785, he adopted the rather loose style which characterizes the talent of the French master.

<sup>2</sup> The Neues Schloss was completely destroyed by bombing in 1945. All that has survived are the railings of the Courtyard of Honour, two columns of the façade framing the entrance and some gutted walls whose statues, by some miracle, have remained intact.

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Karl-Eugen, who had brought back from Paris a passionate love of drama and music, did not fail to erect a *Salle de Spectacle* in the left wing opposite the library. This taste—perhaps the only one the royal couple had in common—was shared by Frederica, who had inherited it from her mother Sophia Wilhelmina of Bayreuth. The Duchess, not content with having arranged for a resident troupe of French actors to be quartered in Stuttgart, wanted to display her prowess as an actress on the boards. Between 1748 and 1751 the royal couple could be applauded in Voltaire's *Semiramis* and in Lamoignon's tragedy *Oreste et Pylade*. Among the dozen or so actors from Paris were Uriot, Dourval, Clairval, Fierville and Le Plaute, who eventually became Director of the Theatre at Cassel, on the feminine side Mme Dugazon and her daughters,<sup>1</sup> not to mention a few *ingénues* whose arrival Frederica soon regretted because of the ravages they caused to Karl-Eugen's susceptible heart. In the main the troupe gave the repertory of the Théâtre Français. The actors attempted the dangerous task of playing in German but had to abandon this because they were unable to pronounce the language satisfactorily.

A common love of the theatre did not suffice to preserve harmony in the royal relations, and clouds soon appeared on the conjugal horizon. At first 'the Duke's little amorous caprices made Frederica smile without inciting her to mockery. The couple trusted each other and were not jealous. Gradually the rival influences of the Dowager Duchess and her daughter-in-law, insidious confidantes, poisoned suspicion with deliberate indiscretions.'<sup>2</sup>

It was of no avail that Karl-Eugen resorted to extreme measures and banished his mother to the castle of Gottingen.<sup>3</sup> Fundamental differences existed and incompatibility of temper persisted. Casa-

<sup>1</sup> Casanova says that one of these girls Rosette, the future wife of the dancer Vestris, could not pronounce her *r*'s. One night he rewrote her part so skilfully that the fatal letter only appeared once.

<sup>2</sup> Maubert, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> After a few vain attempts to recover her liberty the Dowager Duchess consoled herself for her sequestration bymorganatically marrying a certain Baron von Schwartenhau, who one day was found poisoned. Her son's captive she ended her adventurous career rather obscurely in 1756. She was only forty-nine.

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nova maintains that the misunderstanding was not so much due to the husband's infidelities as to a 'bitter insult'—he does not give its nature—to which Frederica was subjected. Perhaps the Duchess irritated her husband by trying to interfere in affairs of state. Perhaps, too, she hoped to introduce into Württemberg the administrative methods invented by her uncle Frederick II. As a Princess of Prussia she thought she was entitled to overawe the little principality by her superior rank of Highness. 'Her folly,' says Casanova, 'was in wanting to govern on the lines of the King of Prussia, whereas that monarch gloated over the Duke of Württemberg whom he called his "monkey".' Whatever may have been the cause, thinking that a journey would be an excellent cure for their ill-humour the couple decided in 1753 to leave for Italy. They attended the Carnival in Venice, frequented the marble-workers' shops in Florence, visited the Capo di Monte factory in Naples and took a great interest in the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum which had just begun. In Rome, Karl-Eugen admired above all the cyclopean proportions of St Peter's, Santa Maria Maggiore, the Villa Borghese and the florid decorations of the Orsini Chapel in the Lateran. He did not wish to leave the Eternal City without having obtained an audience from the Pope. He was disgusted, however, at the idea of kissing the sovereign pontiff's toe. When he was told that all the Cardinals submitted to this custom, he replied 'There are a great many Cardinals but only one Duke of Württemberg'.<sup>1</sup>

Four months of artistic wandering, embittered by constant scenes, only widened the rift between the two travellers. On her return to Stuttgart, Frederica was put on her guard by one of her retinue, the Pucker who had become the Prince's mistress. In this way she learned of her husband's constant infidelities and of the orgies staged by 'a young nobleman, a capricious libertine who constantly reminded the Duke of his sojourn in Paris and persuaded him to renew the reign of the favourites'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Karl-Eugen is an honest man, he never condescended to kiss the Pope's toe.' (Letter from Voltaire to the Countess Lutzelburg, dated 14th December 1753.)

<sup>2</sup> Maubert, *op. cit.*

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The Duke sentenced the Pircker to a few months' imprisonment, a decision that gave rise to a harsh exchange of truths and a violent altercation, during which Frederica fainted. Tired of the struggle, the Duchess took refuge with her family in Bayreuth. The Duke followed her there and 'used his talents so skilfully', says Maubert, 'that no one doubted that he would return happily with the dear and illustrious fugitive'. But Frederica remained adamant. She insisted upon a separation and the Duke returned alone to his capital.

# A Brilliant Reign



To forget his marital troubles, Karl-Eugen plunged into a whirl of pleasures and mad extravagance. The beast had been aroused in him, and unfortunate Württemberg was in future to be ruled by an unleashed tiger.

Talented as a harpsichord, harp and guitar player, and an actor on occasions, the Duke had so far been content to enjoy music and comedies as a cultured amateur. Now his preferences were for opera and ballet, histrionic forms which as a general rule appeal more to the senses than to the brain. In 1750 Retzl had transformed the interior of the old Lusthaus into a theatre whose acoustics left much to be desired. The Duke ordered La Guépière to restore the place without regard to cost, to embellish it with gilt chandeliers and mirrors—the latter were taken from the Ludwigsburg Hall of Mirrors—and to provide the huge stage with the most up-to-date machinery.<sup>1</sup> This stage, in the French architect's estimation, could accommodate four hundred actors or soldiers in Roman dress armed with lances and eighty mounted horsemen, not to mention life-size properties such as camels and elephants, and other triumphal ornaments.<sup>2</sup>

The theatre staff included fifty orchestral musicians—an enormous number for the period—and thirty-two singers chosen, according to Burney, 'from among the best in Germany and Italy', particularly Italy. The ballet masters were almost exclu-

<sup>1</sup> Pretty water-colours of this hall have been preserved in the Königl. Landesbibliothek of Stuttgart.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide the Bulletin de la Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts et des Départements*, vol. 25, 1900.

sively French. At first we meet a certain Sanveterre, and later the famous Noverre, who for eight years made Stuttgart a Mecca of choreography.<sup>1</sup> Karl-Eugen was very proud of this artist who had successfully replaced tedious musical dramas by a light pantomime, relieved by sweeps of the leg which, in the manner of choreographers, 'was supposed to portray by a rigadon or an entrechat all the great heroines such as Rodogune, Chimene, Phèdre and Athalie. The tragedy of *Medea* consisted for Noverre of a flying chariot, a dagger, small children in arms, a few dance steps and music.'<sup>2</sup> According to Casanova, Noverre had eighty subordinates, twenty of whom were stars borrowed from the largest theatres in Italy. At enormous expense this admirable artist created in Stuttgart many of his famous ballets, which were subsequently performed in Paris and Vienna, such as *Medea and Jason*, *Irma*, the *Triumph of Neptune*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, etc. 'The people found it difficult to conceive that such a small man could eat up more money than an army of 12,000 men.'<sup>3</sup>

The troupe included as leading dancer Anguilo Vestris, brother of the famous Gaetan, nicknamed '*Le dieu de la danse*'<sup>4</sup> Karl-Eugen engaged him for six seasons. By the terms of his contract the artist agreed to spend half the year in Stuttgart, where he had entrance to the Court. He received 12,000 florins as opposed to the beggarly 4,000 which Frederick II had grudgingly paid him. One hundred gold lions and jewels to the value of 5,000 florins were given to him on each of his journeys. He also had at his dis-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Georges Noverre, born in Paris in 1729, had been a dancer in Berlin and maître de ballet at the Paris Opera and later in London and Lyons. From the Duke he received a wage of 4,000 florins, 10 tons of wine and 20 steres of wood. His wife, an actress at the Stuttgart Theatre, received a salary of 2,500 florins. The Stuttgart Library possesses a copy of Urot's *Description des fêtes données à l'occasion du jour de la naissance de S. A. S.*, in which one reads: 'The Paris Theatre de l'Opera of which Noverre was the glory and the delight, for fear of losing him for ever have granted him permission to come for three months every year to embellish Monseigneur's spectacles.'

<sup>2</sup> Maubert op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Gaetan Vestris, maître de ballet at the Paris Opera, was the father of Augustin Vestris (1760-1842), who surpassed all the members of his family and achieved real triumphs in Paris and London.

posal a table of six dishes furnished by the palace kitchen and a carriage from the small royal stable. According to Maubert he earned 'in eighteen months 100,000 francs more than the Maréchal de Saxe'.<sup>1</sup>

The costumes were for the most part designed by a Frenchman Bocquet,<sup>2</sup> who stayed at Stuttgart for months on end and brought from Paris, together with a complete assortment of stuffs, a whole team of tailors under Jean-Louis Royer and Mme Debussier.

Karl-Eugen's preferences were naturally for operatic spectacles which entailed the most luxurious presentation. The Duke remained faithful to his favourite composer, the Italian Kapellmeister Jomelli,<sup>3</sup> whose twenty-eight works, 'the most magnificent that ever came out of Germany', maintains Burney, were performed before the footlights. He did not however disdain on occasions to choose a few French composers, and between 1760 and 1770 staged four ballets by J.-J. Rodolphe.

The Duke seems to have concentrated his greatest efforts on the theatrical machinery. The sets were at first entrusted to

<sup>1</sup> Angiolo Vestris (Paris 1727) met in Stuttgart a Marseilles actress, Mme Gourgaud, who, with her two daughters, played in the theatre under the name of Dugazon. One of the daughters, Rosette, a charming girl of twenty, of very easy virtue, made a conquest both of Vestris and of the Duke himself. The latter one day surprised his rival and his mistress in a situation which left no doubt as to the nature of their relations. Pistol in hand, the Duke insisted that the couple should make their liaison legitimate or leave Wurttemberg on the spot. The marriage took place and Vestris continued to dance in Stuttgart until 1767, when his engagement expired. He then retired to Paris with the little Dugazon.

<sup>2</sup> The library of the Paris Opera has numerous costume designs by Bocquet.

<sup>3</sup> Mention is made of Jomelli in a letter from Mozart's father to Herr Hagenauer dated 11th July 1765. 'Apart from his salary of 4,000 florins, a horse, wood, light and a house in Stuttgart, another here [in Ludwigsburg], Jomelli enjoys the Duke's highest favour. His widow is to receive 2,000 florins pension. Finally he has full power over his musicians and as a result his music is excellent. The Duke has a pleasant habit of making his artists wait a very long time before rewarding them, and I consider this to be the work of Jomelli, who does everything in his power to keep Germans away from this court. He is already firmly in the saddle and he will remain there.' (Letter quoted in Gschler's *Life of Mozart*.)



Biccio,<sup>1</sup> the painter Scotti, and Columba,<sup>2</sup> but the French soon replaced the Italians. Casanova was probably alluding to the Chevalier de Marolles, a pupil of Blondel, when he records the presence at Stuttgart of 'a very skilled stage-hand who almost makes one believe in magic'. Then in 1764 Karl-Eugen, wishing to astound Europe by the degree of perfection achieved in his capital in the art of *mise-en-scène*, did not hesitate to call on the famous Servandoni, that master who had already revolutionized Paris by the originality of his inventions and in particular by his genius for transformation scenes.<sup>3</sup>

Every latitude was given to the artist to draw as he pleased on the public funds. For the season's programme of 1764 he staged a ballet with twenty-one changes of scene, and Jonelli's opera *Dido Abandoned* which entailed twenty transformation scenes. Servandoni, the man who according to Frederick II should have been with the King of Poland (Augustus III) to complete his ruin and whom Maubert calls the 'terror of the Courts of Versailles and Vienna', was to cost Karl-Eugen half his revenues. During the most brilliant period of his reign he often swallowed up 100,000 florins a year. The Württembergers would no doubt have preferred less magnificence and fewer taxes.

With such components and such extravagance it is obvious that the Stuttgart opera had no difficulty in surpassing the most illustrious of those in Germany, and equalling the Paris Opéra. Musical performances were given on Tuesdays and Fridays, redoubts on Mondays and Thursdays. In the winter there was

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Biccio, son-in-law of Leopoldo Retti, built the theatre at Grafeneck, the hunting castle where Karl-Eugen spent periods of roisterous gaiety.

<sup>2</sup> Columba (Baptiste Innocent, 1717-93) worked in various European capitals and spent eighteen years at the Court of Stuttgart. Appointed scene designer of Karl-Eugen's theatres at a salary of 3,000 florins in 1751, he became ten years later, professor at the Academy of Art. For the 1763 carnival he built the famous wooden palace which served as setting for the famous *Fête de l'Olympe*, and decorated the interior of the theatre at Sohlthule. The Opera House of Turin is also his work (1768).

<sup>3</sup> The Chevalier Jérôme Servandoni (1695-1766) son of a Lyons scene designer was employed after 1724 at the Paris Opéra and later in London and Vienna. He received at Stuttgart a wage of 15,000 livres to which must be added board, heating and the use of a court carriage.

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doubtless some difficulty in filling a hall heated only by 3,000 candles, so the director, on the Duke's orders, assured himself of a full house by forcing the burghers and the soldiers of the guard to fill the empty seats. The sovereign reserved the right to give the signal for applause. Casanova, who arrived one night without knowing the protocol, caused a veritable scandal by clapping his hands tempestuously. When called to order he merely replied: 'Good, in that case I shall only come to the theatre when the Prince is not present, for I like to applaud a song when it pleases me.' The Duke, probably in a good temper that evening, did not hold it against the adventurer. He gave him permission to stay in Stuttgart as long as he liked and even authorized him to give free reign to his enthusiasm. Casanova, taking advantage of this privilege, failed one evening to follow his master's signal. When asked the reason for this new breach of etiquette he replied casually: 'I didn't care for the song.' Casanova was certainly quite incorrigible.

On the 15th February 1765, a fire broke out in the Opera House and spread to the whole right wing of the castle, being halted only at the main block.<sup>1</sup> The conflagration destroyed Karl-Eugen's private apartments and the Duke was forced to take refuge in another part of the building. The following October, finding fault with his new quarters and flattered perhaps to be able to imitate the French kings who had left Paris for Versailles, he decided to settle permanently in Ludwigsburg. Actually the discomfort of his quarters was a mere pretext. For some time he had complained of the Estates of Wurtemberg<sup>2</sup> and their refusal to grant him the necessary credits for his extravagance. To the remonstrances couched in ever stronger terms by this assembly, Karl-Eugen one day used the magnificent reply borrowed from the *Roi Soleil*: 'Why do you talk to me of the State? I am the State.' To deprive the capital of the court by which it lived—Stuttgart was cut off from all fetes for eleven years—seemed to him adequate vengeance for these reproaches.

<sup>1</sup> This wing was only rebuilt in 1779.

<sup>2</sup> The Palace of the Wurtemberg Estates is today the Ministry of Agriculture in the Lindenstrasse.

Ludwigsburg had been very neglected since the death of its founder. Karl-Alexander had lived there at rare intervals and so far Karl-Ludwig had only visited it either to inspect the manufacture of porcelain, of which he had assumed the direction since 1758,<sup>1</sup> or to decide upon certain works. For instance, in 1748, as a compliment to Frederica of Bavaria, a fervent Protestant, he decided to consecrate the former Catholic chapel to the reformed cult and on this occasion enriched it with a delightful gallery decorated with gilt sculptured panels. At other times he went there to receive important guests—the Emperor (1744), the Empress Maria Theresa (1746), or for some gala, the brilliance of which caused a sensation throughout Europe. An eyewitness has left us a detailed account of the *Fete de l'Olympe* given in 1763, which typified the insensate extravagance of this petty potentate.

‘When the guests approached the castle they were suddenly enveloped in clouds of smoke. At a signal from the Duke the clouds dispersed, to reveal Wotan and all the gods. Jupiter immediately ordered the building of a sumptuous palace (the work of Columbus). The last clouds disappeared and in the courtyard of the castle could be seen a palace supported on gilded columns and illuminated with 200,000 candles. The gods began to sing in Italian. Supper followed in the castle. From the centre of the table Venus rose with sixteen *putti*, who offered the ladies porcelain flowers. Then Cupid shot an arrow against the wall which opened upon a ballet. To end the proceedings there was an immense fireworks display, organised by an Italian artificer who received a duke’s pay, with 10,000

<sup>1</sup> The management of the concern was entrusted to the Viennese artist Rinzier, who had 200 workers under his control. The workshops produced pieces inspired from models acquired by the Duke from the big factories of Saxony, Bavaria or Höchst. Certain original models, in particular the famous table group *Neptune’s Bath* (1764), were produced by the Württemberg court artists Lejeune or Levettr. The groups, vases or figures—some of which were 5 feet high and whose execution usually lacked sobriety, served to adorn the royal residences. The Ludwigsburg factory reached its peak during the Seven Years War (1756–63) while those of Saxony were unemployed. It declined about 1773 and the traveller Nicolai, who visited it ten years later, found it in complete ruin. It closed down in 1824.

rockets and a set-piece of 6,000 squibs. The cost of this display was 50,000 florins<sup>1</sup>

The same prodigious luxury was displayed the following year in the Tournay of the Five Continents, and Justinus Kerner in his youth heard mention of a ball where Karl-Eugen distributed with his own hands 50,000 thalers' worth of favours<sup>1</sup>

It was easy to foresee that Karl-Eugen, having decided to hold his permanent court at Ludwigsburg, would be dissatisfied with the Alte Fürstenbau, which was far too modest and reminded him of his father's tragic death. He took up his quarters in the Neue Fürstenbau, whose windows overlooked the gardens. The first storey was renovated by von Leger. Round the great oval hall which had become the dining-hall were grouped a suite of apartments decorated in rococo style *Salle des Gardes*, audience chamber, bedroom, music cabinet, picture gallery<sup>2</sup> and library<sup>3</sup>. The rooms of the second storey were decorated with pretty stuccoes which have survived<sup>4</sup>

Karl-Eugen took the greatest pains to embellish the gardens. The water, which was in short supply—Montesquieu had already remarked upon this—was brought at great expense to feed the basins, fountains and cascades. La Guépière declares that he was ordered to erect 'more than half' the edifices, temples, belvederes and Chinese pavilions which were fashionable at the time<sup>5</sup>. The Prince also transformed Eberhard-Ludwig's orangery into an

<sup>1</sup> Justinus Kerner *Das Bilderbuch aus meiner Knabenzeit*, 1849.

<sup>2</sup> Weber records that when he visited it at the beginning of the nineteenth century the collection still included a Titian, several Van Dycks, a Mignard, a Jules Romain and a few erotic canvases. On several occasions it had been pillaged of its best pictures, which were transported in 1768 to Solitude, in 1770 to the apartments of Karl-Eugen's second wife and in 1790 to Schloss Hohenheim.

<sup>3</sup> In this library, removed to Stuttgart in 1776, was an astronomical clock, which aroused the admiration of the English traveller Burney.

<sup>4</sup> Among the remarkable pieces of French furniture preserved in the castle those worthy of mention are a red-lacquer Louis XV desk, a charming Louis XVI escritoire with panels painted in cameo blue, five music desks in gilt carved wood and a number of fine armchairs.

<sup>5</sup> Few traces remain of these old gardens, a round temple which shelters a statue larger than life, several ruins of mythological figures, today covered with ivy, a small cabinet whose ceiling was painted by Guibal, a Swiss chalet perched on an escarpment and at the end of the park the Enslung Pavilion on a rocky crest.

immense hall 240 yards long and 50 yards wide to serve as a setting for various games, ballets and concerts. According to the poet Justinus Kerner, the visitor could walk through a forest of orange and lemon trees 'so dense that he could easily get lost in them'. The foliage of these shrubs and trellises laden with clusters of grapes entirely hid the framework and the windows of the roof. About thirty miniature lakes provided coolness and it was lit by 100,000 lamps.<sup>1</sup>

Finally La Guépière was commissioned to build in the gardens the largest opera hall in the whole of Germany (220 yards long and 80 yards wide).<sup>2</sup> It was built entirely of wood, completed in three months and put into service in 1765. The external architecture was of no artistic merit; the interior alone counted, and was decorated by Columba with a profusion of columns, mirrors and chandeliers which made it look 'quite magnificent', according to Mme d'Oberkuch, or merely 'very strange' according to the more reserved judgement of Goethe, who visited it in 1797 when the building was almost in ruins. The back of the stage could open direct on to the gardens, allowing the use of enormous crowds in a vast open-air amphitheatre. A ballet was given there—*The Capture of Mexico*—whose presentation required the use of several regiments of foot soldiers and cavalry.<sup>3</sup>

The fetes continued without interruption at Ludwigsburg. The neighbouring forest served as a natural décor for the *Fête de Diane*; the gardens were illuminated for a *Fête de Vénus* and masked balls figured prominently in the round of pleasure. Servandoni one day submitted to Karl-Eugen the plan for a diversion, warning him that it would be particularly costly. The Prince at first agreed, believing his purse to be inexhaustible. 'I must warn Your Highness,' insisted the artist, 'that you would not have enough money left to pay for your luncheon tomorrow.' The Duke was alarmed and on this occasion submitted to defeat. The

<sup>1</sup> Justinus Kerner, *op. cit.* The orangery burned down in 1762.

<sup>2</sup> It occupied the site of the lake which was later dug in the gardens.

<sup>3</sup> This theatre, too hastily built of perishable materials, was probably repaired in 1770 after the collapse of the roof. When Karl-Eugen finally abandoned Ludwigsburg (1775) the building was no longer kept in repair and was in such a pitiful state in 1801 that it was decided to demolish it.

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foreign gazettes abound in details of the pleasures of the enchanted life at Ludwigsburg and the luxury, comparable only with that of Versailles, which reigned at the feasts given by this megalomaniac wizard<sup>1</sup>

One might have thought that the vanity of Karl-Eugen and his passion for building would at last have been satisfied. This would have been to misjudge him. In 1764 the Duke planned the renovation of a hunting lodge near a three-acre pond in the depths of the forest, abounding in game, and therefore ideal in his eyes.

This lodge, situated two miles north-east of Ludwigsburg, was known as the Schloss-am-See. It was to be rechristened Monrepos—the name we shall use—at the beginning of the nineteenth century (1804), when King Frederick made it his summer residence.

La Guépière furnished the plans and carried out the work in collaboration with the Frenchman Royer, the German Sauer and the stucco worker Bossi. The work lasted three years (1764–7).

Monrepos consists of a main block with two wings in the form of an ellipse. The rear façade is no less charming than the main front, although the massive sub-foundations with their arcades dominating the lake are out of proportion to the castle they carry. The vestibule, La Guépière's work, has a ceiling by Guibal (Eros leaving Venus) and four figures of the seasons sculptured by Lejeune.<sup>2</sup> The centre, on the main floor, comprises a fine oval salon, 'a little jewel as seductive in the ingenuity of the design as in the grace of its proportions. Comparable with the Amalienburg of Cavaliés (in the Nymphenburg Park near Munich) it is one of the most perfect examples of German Louis XV style.'<sup>3</sup> Taken as a whole Monrepos can be considered as the pearl of rococo architecture in Württemberg.

<sup>1</sup> Voltane, who was often invited to the junketings at Ludwigsburg, wrote to Urot: 'Never have I felt so cruelly the meaning of old age and bad health until both prevented me from mingling with the crowd of admirers—but on reading your letter I thought that I could see all these things which border on the prodigious' (Letter from Ferney).

<sup>2</sup> Lejeune executed for Monrepos four other statues—Adonis, Meleager and two nymphs.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Beau. The Castle of Monrepos suffered no damage in the Second World War.

## The Castle of Solitude



Monrepos was no sooner finished<sup>1</sup> than Karl-Eugen took a sudden dislike to it and became absorbed in another whim, the castle of Solitude. In 1763 a day's hunting brought the Prince to a place known as 'The Five Oaks', in the depth of the forest on the slopes of Leonberg, two miles from Stuttgart. This site appeared to him, with every justification, as one of the most charming he had ever seen. From this height there are magnificent views, towards the Franconian mountains, and as far as the foothills of the Vosges. The Duke first approached a local architect, Weyhing, to build him a modest hunting lodge on the spot. He soon returned, however, to La Guépière, whom he considered to be a man of vision, and ordered him to build a real castle with sufficient annexes to house the entire court. Four years (1763-7) were enough for the French artist to fulfil this programme and the new castle rose on the terrace which served it as a kind of pedestal. The main single-storeyed block, which in the old days was surmounted by a gilded dome,<sup>2</sup> was reached by a horseshoe staircase. Although the exterior architecture, delightful as a whole, in certain lines and details offends a French eye, La Guépière cannot be held responsible for these imperfections of style. The artist did not carry out the work on his own since Weyhing was often called in to give his advice.

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the interior decoration of Monrepos was only to be completed in 1804 by King Frederick, who employed the architect Thouret to restore the original rooms in Empire style, which was the fashion throughout Europe.

<sup>2</sup> The large group of gilded figures crowning it was removed for safety in 1808.

The interior on the other hand, with beautiful stuccoes by Bossi, is a delight.<sup>1</sup> The huge oval hall, which forms the main block, completed in 1769 and probably used as a dining-hall, has walls decorated with double Ionian columns. Above a cornice whose sobriety heralds the approach of the classical reaction, is a florid decoration of groups and trophies of gilded stucco. The painted ceiling is the work of Guibal (*L'Influence des Arts*).<sup>2</sup> To left and right of the oval hall is the gaming-room, with magnificent blue-and-gold stucco, and the assembly room. The latter has to be crossed to reach the west pavilion, containing the Duke's apartments: a boudoir with tobacco-coloured panelled walls, a small bedroom, study and library. The walls of these various rooms are decorated with either imitation marble or painted and gilded woodwork of such excellence that they can be attributed to the best Parisian artisans. Solitude was furnished in 1768 with the overflow from Ludwigsburg.

Two long main semicircular buildings behind the castle are also the work of La Guépière and one of his pupils, the Württemberger Fischer.<sup>3</sup> The latter collaborated so closely with his master that it is difficult to distinguish between the work of these two artists. The east wing, reserved for the courtiers' quarters, ended in a chapel (known only by certain contemporary engravings) whose entirely French aspect seems to denote La Guépière's handiwork. It was decorated with a painting by Guibal (the Resurrection of Christ) and stuccoes by Scotti. At one angle of the west

<sup>1</sup> La Guépière's plans for the interior of Solitude are preserved in the Stuttgart library.

<sup>2</sup> Until 1808 this oval room was decorated with twelve groups of divinities symbolizing the pleasures, industries and mineral wealth of Württemberg. Diana and Actæon represented hunting, Thetis and her son the mineral sources, Venus and the Graces the manufacture of mirrors. Most of these groups are known from reproductions in porcelain carried out at the Ludwigsburg factory.

<sup>3</sup> Ferdinand Heinrich Fischer (Stuttgart, 1746-1813), a pupil of the sculptor Bayer, Guibal and La Guépière, was appointed first designer to the court. In this capacity he accompanied Karl-Lugen to Venice in 1767. The Duke commissioned him to build a palace in that town and to restore the Villa Barbarigo, which he had leased on the Brenta. When La Guépière departed Fischer remained sole court architect until the Duke's death.



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wing, which contained the quarters of the castle employees, was the theatre planned by Columba, where numerous performances were given over a period of ten years. No trace of it remains today.

The requirements of the chase also necessitated the building of vast stables two hundred yards from the castle. These were finished in 1768 by Fischer, and according to Mme d'Oberkirch 'were almost as famous as those of Chantilly'. They formed an immense square 700 yards long and could house nearly 400 horses. In the centre, in a domed vestibule surmounted by a gilt equestrian group, four marble horses sprayed water into a basin whose bottom was lined with mirrors engraved with the Duke's initials. The sumptuousness of the banquets served in this most original dining-hall was unrivalled. 'They were regal,' says Mme d'Oberkirch. Another traveller who was a guest at Solitude in 1775 was amazed by the sight of 'four hundred horses which did not grow restless', but ventured a criticism: 'it was very hot because of the candles and the odours were very pungent.'<sup>1</sup>

Anyone other than Karl-Engen would perhaps have been content to see this work completed. The Duke however had not yet exhausted his mania for building. In 1772, in other words at the most brilliant period of Solitude, he commissioned from Fischer the Laurel Gallery, which was demolished before the end of the century. This building, 150 yards long and 17 yards wide, protruded from the west angle of the castle. The façade was rather monotonous, relieved by a higher central block decorated with eight columns. It was used only for receptions and comprised three halls. The centre of these, overlaid with stucco and surrounded by a colonnade, was reserved for dancing, it separated the dining-hall from the gaming-room.<sup>2</sup>

Karl-Engen, 'that destroyer of nature' as the Prince de Ligne<sup>3</sup> called him, insisted that Fischer should strip the surroundings of his new residence of all its woodland character in order to create

<sup>1</sup> Dr Berdot: *Voyage de Montbeillard à Berlin*, 1775.

<sup>2</sup> Lejeune executed a statue of Apollo for the Laurel Gallery, it can be seen at Ludwigsburg where it was transported in 1809.

<sup>3</sup> Prince de Ligne: *Coup d'œil sur Belœil*.

the most spectacular gardens. It was no easy task. The uneven ground made broad rectilinear prospects impossible. The artist adopted a rather confused and irregular plan comprising a host of small lawns, shrubberies and quincunxes, enlivened with vases and statues and joined together by masonry and trellises, all picturesque<sup>1</sup> enough in effect. Near the Laurel Gallery was the rose garden, the maze and the open-air theatre. In the east garden, from a large basin fed by cascades emerged an island on which La Guépière had built a small temple. An avenue which followed the crest of the hill was flanked on one side by a tall hedge cut into arcades. Through these openings the eye was regaled by the spectacular view of the environs of Stuttgart.

In 1769 a little Chinese house whose roof bore two oriental porcelain figures, one seated, the other standing holding a sunshade decorated with balls, was erected in a more remote part of the park. The interior of this kiosk, which today is in ruins, includes small rooms, alcoves, a mirrored cabinet etc., decorated with German stucco and wallpapers in the Chinese style, leading off a reception room. Nicolai, who visited the park at Solitude in 1781, describes a Botanical Garden 'with tame white deer which ran up at the sound of a shot to receive their food', and a most astonishing hydraulic machine, with which, like squirrels, two men 'by treading the wheels produced large quantities of water'. A French inventor, Jean Michel, had erected it in 1780.<sup>2</sup> The gardens at Solitude have almost completely disappeared.

The country round Solitude was ideal for the chase. Karl-Eugen transformed part of the neighbouring forest into a vast game preserve in the middle of which Fischer built a charming hunting lodge in 1768. (It still stands today.) This lodge was called the Bärensee on account of two enormous bronze bears between the steps and the lake, which had been dug for the purpose of hunting in the immediate vicinity.

Karl-Eugen's new residence was the scene of magnificent fêtes. On certain evenings all the surrounding hills were lit up by a

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* the plan engraved by Abel in 1784 after the 1777 plans of Fischer.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolai *Beschreibung einer Reise*, 1781.

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thousand bonfires and the artificial grottoes came to life with hosts of nymphs and dancing satyrs. At other times the castle became an inaccessible hermitage and then the court knew that a new favourite had just captivated the Duke's heart.

Solitude, one of Karl-Eugen's most delightful creations, has never justified its name better than today. When in early autumn we visited this spot, so long deserted and abandoned, it aroused a feeling of profound melancholy. And yet what remains of the castle still allows one to evoke its past splendour and to admire its incomparable site.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The castle of Solitude was tastefully restored towards the end of the nineteenth century, it survived the bombing of the Second World War. The outbuildings have been transformed into a hospital for men blinded in the war.

## The Court of Karl-Eugen



The brilliant period of Solitude marks the peak of Karl-Eugen's reign. The Prince was just over forty. His qualities and defects, so closely bound up, now came to light, forming a character full of strange contrasts. He was certainly not lacking in talent. He had a keen mind, an excellent memory, sound judgement and some skill in affairs of state. He liked botany, was interested in the arts, willingly entertained men of learning at his table and, in the course of his frequent journeys, visited libraries, factories and hospitals, taking every opportunity of acquiring knowledge. There exist many portraits of him, couched in terms of unstinted enthusiasm, by contemporaries who knew him well. We may quote two of them, one by a courtier, Baron von Wimpffen, and the other by a scholar, Lavater.

'The Duke,' according to the former, 'is witty and lucid in conversation, amenable and of equable humour. He is virtuous and fitted to accomplish great and generous deeds. Nature has endowed him with everything that could make a prince famous, and we may presume that, had he been forced to earn fortune and fame by his talents and his sword, he would have become the most remarkable man of his age. But, becoming a sovereign at the age of sixteen, dazzled by a host of beauties who made overtures and solicited the favour of his glances, master in fact of all the objects passion could desire and induced by excellent health to seize these objects with delight, it would be surprising if in this turmoil and daily agitation, among these vivid perpetual invitations of nature and all it offered in the way of

seduction, he did not succumb to such powerful and manifold temptations.<sup>1</sup>

Lavater, the famous physiognomist, is even more indulgent towards his model. 'Karl-Eugen,' he wrote to Goethe, 'is the most original and finest type of man, a fortuitous mixture of majesty and grace. He is a real duke. He possesses limitless energy and a vanity that can never be assuaged. He has the eye of an eagle and the gait of a hero, an urge for action and a knowledge of his worth when he thinks comparatively. In him are to be found the elements of life and death, heaven and hell.'

And here is the other side of the medal. The 'Swabian Solomon', as he was called, was the epitome of a small eighteenth-century German despot, entirely dazzled by absolutism. 'I am the Fatherland,' he liked to say, 'and the image of the Godhead upon earth.'<sup>2</sup> Karl-Eugen was carried away by ambition and his megalomania knew no bounds. He never went out unless accompanied by an escort of Turkish or Moonish hussars. His journeys entailed the services of 700 retainers and 600 horses. Another Gessler, he insisted that the hughers took off their hats to his guards as they passed the sentry-boxes and he ordered a privy councillor who failed to salute one of his soldiers to be given twenty-five lashes. He treated his subjects like cattle and imposed upon them the harshest drudgery.<sup>3</sup> Vanity seems to have been the driving force behind his activities. 'It was not long before I realized that the Prince's great passion was to talk about himself,' writes Casanova. 'He liked to hear that no prince in the world had more taste or ingenuity for inventing pleasures than himself, nor a greater capacity for government.' Schiller did not hide the resentment he felt for the Duke, at whose hands he suffered a great deal. 'As a Prince,' he wrote, 'he has great faults, as a man even greater, and these faults outweigh his good qualities.'

<sup>1</sup> Baron von Wimpffen *Memoires*.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller put in the mouth of President Walter, one of the characters in his tragedy, *Kabale und Liebe*, this quip which certainly originated from Karl-Eugen. 'When I appear a kingdom trembles.'

<sup>3</sup> He harnessed them to his sleighs when the snow was insufficient or soft. Fortia de Piles writes: 'The Prince is enamoured of horses, carriages and above all sleighs.' He amassed a huge quantity of these and a score of them are on display on the ground floor of the Stuttgart Schloss.

## THE DUCHY OF WURTTENBERG

His main failing was undoubtedly his outrageous extravagance. Karl-Eugen squandered the resources of Württemberg to such an extent that according to Maubert, in an attempt to remain 'a prince of the first order, he brought his country to the verge of ruin'

The court of this small ruler of a bare 600,000 subjects was, as Casanova maintains, the most brilliant in Europe; it was also 'the centre of pleasure and attraction for all the foreign nobility'<sup>1</sup> Karl-Eugen 'kept 800 horses for his private use. He had the best opera, the best orchestra, the finest ballets in Europe, the best French comedy after Paris and in addition to the many performances which he gave free he staged the most extraordinary fetes'.<sup>2</sup>

In 1763 his household consisted of no fewer than 1,800 officials, including a Hofmarschall, a court chamberlain, a master of the hunt, a cup-bearer, a host of *obers* and 169 chamberlains.<sup>3</sup> The prince was surrounded by a host of court pages receiving high salaries,<sup>4</sup> and an army of valets, heyducks, negroes, cooks, flunkies in magnificent liveries, and halberdiers whose uniforms were covered with gold, silver and rich furs.<sup>5</sup> All the posts were sold to the highest bidder, but to obtain one it was often enough for a man to speak French and above all to know how to eat, drink and hunt, to bow and scrape and to appear gay, serious or sad as the occasion demanded.

Strict etiquette regulated the least actions of court life. Ritter von Lang in his memoirs has recorded the daily routine of Karl-Eugen, to whom he was secretary for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> Monseigneur Gottfried Pahl *History of Württemberg*, 1827

<sup>2</sup> Baron von Wimpffen *Mémoires*

<sup>3</sup> All these high officials were in practice puppets manœuvred by a personage who enjoyed a sort of occult power. This was a French valet named Perrotin, who dispensed his master's favours and for several years exercised undisputed influence on the artistes of the opera, including Noverre and Jomelli, the music and theatre directors, the artificers, architects and even the ministers.

<sup>4</sup> Many of the posts however were badly paid, and the privy councillors had to be content with a salary of 3,500 florins if they were noblemen and 2,500 if they were burghers.

<sup>5</sup> Gottfried Pahl, *op. cit.*

## THE COURT OF KARL-EUGEN

'Each morning at 11 o'clock (if we were lucky), but more often at two o'clock, we had to attend the Prince's *lever*. As soon as the valet had opened the doors all those waiting in the antechamber entered, the Hofmarschall, the Stallmeister, the doctor and we secretaries, the court huntsmen and a few foreigners if any happened to be present. The Prince put himself in the hands of his barber.<sup>1</sup> Everyone tried to utter some witticism. As soon as the Duke rose all who received no orders to retire remained. The Prince then paid a visit to the ladies of his family, attended Mass and gave audiences until dinner, which was often served very late.'<sup>2</sup>

Karl-Eugen, 'a passionate and prodigal prince', says Casanova, 'was eager to be considered another Hercules in the labours of Bacchus and Venus.' He did not keep a harem like the Pasha Margrave of Baden who was nicknamed 'His Serene Highness the German Turk', but contented himself with casual affairs. 'He shared his heart between 100 mistresses'<sup>3</sup> who were more than usually greedy since they knew that their favour was ephemeral. At first these little peccadilloes were mainly to hoodwink the Duchess, then, from caprice, boredom and finally from habit, he lapsed into the coarsest debauch.<sup>4</sup> The favourites were for the most part chosen from the theatre. 'All the dancers were pretty,' says Casanova, the principal chronicler of the Prince's amorous adventures, 'and boasted of having at least once given pleasure to His Highness.'

From these elect a few names emerge such as that of Gardello

<sup>1</sup> From 1750 onwards all the barbers' shops in Württemberg were in the hands of Frenchmen who made wigs of hair, horsehair and even of silver, copper or steel wire, they also concocted unguents, powders and pomades according to Parisian prescriptions. From France too, came the music and dancing masters.

<sup>2</sup> According to Lang, the Duke made life very difficult for his secretaries. Although he knew French almost as well as German, he was not particularly familiar with the finesses of either language. He would dictate some decree in German and disapprove of the faithful French translation of the text as soon as it was handed to him. He was a stickler for small details and more than once Lang was severely admonished for not having placed his dots right above the i's.

<sup>3</sup> Baroness d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires*.

<sup>4</sup> Maubert, *op. cit.*

## THE DUCHY OF WÜRTTEMBERG

the gondolier's daughter who was married to the dancer Agata. 'The Duke asked her husband if he were prepared to be complaisant and the man was only too happy to accede to his wishes. She incited the Duke to constant infidelities, playing the rôle of Minister of Pleasure to a sovereign who treated her like a princess.' <sup>1</sup> She was lodged in the palace of the Crown Prince (the son of Eberhard-Ludwig), had noble pages as valets, and the right to use the jewels from the treasure, the livery of the palace and the court coaches. Her birthday was considered worthy of celebration with a salute of cannon. She even went so far as to beat her lover. During a journey to Venice the Duke surprised her with Count Patenheimer and 'tired of her charms, pensioned her off with the title of Madame'. <sup>2</sup>

Among the other accredited mistresses who for some time enjoyed the Duke's favour was Mlle Dugazon, the future Mme Vestris, the Pucker, a chambermaid who was the main cause of the quarrel between the Duke and his wife, the dancer Toscanini, Nancy Levrier, an English actress, and the singer Bonafini. <sup>3</sup> All these favourites during their reign were entitled to wear blue satin slippers. Above the door of their house, which was guarded by a soldier, was a motif in the form of a bonnet indicating the master's good graces. In ten years Karl-Eugen found himself the father of so many natural sons, all masquerading as Counts of Fianquemont, that at one time he thought of forming a regiment, all of whose officers should belong to this fortuitous family.

The Duke was not content to be merely a great Lothario, he was also a passionate hunter in the family tradition. Game, all of which was considered to belong solely to the prince, was plentiful in Württemberg since it was forbidden on pain of heavy penalties to touch this sacred property. 'Anyone who hurls a stone at a partridge or eats a hare which has been ravaging his cabbages is severely punished,' writes Gottfried Pahl. <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Casanova

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*

<sup>3</sup> It was she whom Karl-Eugen installed at Solitude in a small lodge known as the *Maison des Plantes* or *Maison de Mademoiselle*, which was later used by the Duke's second wife.

<sup>4</sup> 'The expenses of the chase are excessive, immense forests, parks reserved for the amusement of the prince at the expense of agriculture,



A day's hunting usually demanded weeks of preparation and required an army of beaters, either volunteers or impressed, to drive several thousand head of game into precincts surrounded by fences or toils. When the preserve to be hunted lacked a pond into which the animals could be driven, the peasants in the neighbourhood were compelled to dig one.

Autumn called the court to Degerloch, a hunting property five miles from Stuttgart,<sup>1</sup> where Karl-Eugen had caused stands to be erected on the banks of an artificial pond for those taking part in the hunt. It was in this setting that on the 22nd February 1767 he celebrated his birthday with a gala which a guest has recorded for us:

'The party began at 10 o'clock with a collation served in a marquee. Then at a signal from the Duke, the horns rang out and the precincts were opened. The animals rushed into the lake where the hunters in richly decorated gondolas shot them down or killed them with stakes. The guests, comfortably installed at the pavilion windows, enjoyed this spectacle of butchery. It was a blood bath. The evening ended with a concert. The following days were devoted to shooting. In the course of this hunt, 121 large stags and 50 small ones, 150 small, 61 large and 180 two-year-old boars, 56 badgers, 207 foxes, 5,000 hares, 550 partridges and 209 wild duck were shot.'

In summer Karl-Eugen gave the signal for the court to move to his favourite pleasure resort, Schloss Grafeneck, 'situated in the lush woodland country of the Black Forest where he spent part of the hottest season of the year.'<sup>2</sup> He was accompanied by a relatively small retinue, 'six to seven hundred persons', including ten or twelve gentlemen and a few amiable and pretty women

trade and the necessities of life, occupy vast expanses of country which remain uncultivated and keep the peasants in poverty' (Burney).

<sup>1</sup> In the immediate vicinity of Degerloch Karl Eugen was later to build the castle of Hohenheim for his second wife.

<sup>2</sup> Baron Wimpffen *Mémoires*. Schloss Grafeneck, built by Weyhing or more probably by La Guépière, near Münsingen in the centre of a triangle formed by Ulm, Tübingen and Reutlingen, was very similar to Solitude. Partially demolished in 1798, very few traces of it remain.

'destined to contribute to his pleasures'. At Grafeneck hunting took second place on the programme of pastimes. The days were spent in rustic diversions and theatrical performances. Baron Wimpffen, who boasts that he was never omitted from the list of guests, has left us a picture of the days spent in this delightful retreat.

'Two different choirs gave the signal for reveille. Luncheon was taken in company and if the weather were fine, in some lonely shaded spot in the Black Forest. Rondos and quadrilles to the sound of rustic instruments loosened up the limbs for the evening's ball. The remainder of the time was devoted to dressing, gambling, good food, various spectacles, hunting and fishing parties and walks rendered all the more delightful because the forests of Germany are more sombre, greener and more rural, and because the Floras and Hebes added to our enjoyment.'

After a day devoted to bucolic pleasures, the evening was spent in a theatre, built in 1763, whose restricted dimensions excluded complicated productions.<sup>1</sup> Here they were confined to light comedies played by the French troupe or operas into which Noverre inserted 'gracious ballets' where 'these Floras and Hebes frolicked'. The orchestra was composed of first-class virtuosos.<sup>2</sup> The Prince, cancelling the ordinary protocol, insisted that the ladies of the court should sit down at the supper table with the actresses and the singers. Baron Wimpffen considered that a season at Grafeneck, incidentally 'the most pleasurable moment of his life', must have 'engulfed the treasure of Tamerlane'.

The facts are lacking to establish a parallel between the budget of the famous Tatar conqueror and that of the small prince of Swabia, but one cannot help wondering by what miracle Karl-Eugen managed for twenty years to lead a life of luxury which infected all classes of society. How could he support the enormous expense of buildings, fetes, journeys, hunts, mistresses and theatrical ventures? The revenue of Wurttemberg was barely six and a

<sup>1</sup> The Grafeneck theatre was transported to Monrepos in 1808.

<sup>2</sup> Baron Wimpffen. *Mémoires*.

half million florins and there was no question of raising the taxes, which were already crushing. Doubtless every expedient was found acceptable to feed the coffers of a public treasury whose deficit reached twenty-eight million florins. The inhabitants of Stuttgart suddenly found themselves liable to a contribution of 150,000 florins because the Prince lacked funds to complete his buildings, or again the presence of the court at Stuttgart being a source of profit, they had to purchase for 50,000 florins the privilege of seeing him prolong his stay in the capital for a few weeks. Karl-Eugen had a monopoly of all the main necessities of life. One fine morning he confiscated half a million florins' worth of ecclesiastical property, another day he cut down half the Württemberg forest, one of the country's main sources of wealth. In his search for money Karl-Eugen resorted to lotteries and debased the currency. He was forced to knock at every door, to borrow from bankers and private individuals.

It is rather a surprise to find Voltaire among his creditors —and it is worth examining more closely the details of his financial relations with this famous man of letters. The episode, which is curious and little known, deserves a moment's attention.

Voltaire was not content merely to be the great intellectual leader of his century. He is known throughout his life to have gone to great trouble to conserve a fortune to which he seemed as much attached as to his literary reputation. He had a passion for speculation and as d'Argenson says in his *Mémoires* 'He was always trotting between Parnassus and the rue Quincampoix.'

In his memoirs Voltaire describes how he lent Karl-Eugen 620,000 livres in exchange for an annuity. In about 1735, during a stay at the court of Frederick II, he found himself momentarily the butt of certain people who were jealous of his favour and his wealth. For this reason, in addition to many others, he was disgusted with Berlin and the King did nothing to try and retain him. 'Let him be,' he said to La Mettrie, 'you press the orange and throw it away when you have swallowed the juice.' This witticism when repeated to Voltaire stirred him to action. 'I then resolved,' he says, 'to place the orange peel in safe-keeping. I was careful not to invest these funds in the estates of my Alcinea [the enchant-

ress in Ariosto's novel who changed her cast-off lovers into trees]. I took profitable mortgages on lands which the Duke of Wurtemberg possesses in France.' No doubt he had merely transferred to Karl-Eugen's duchy the proceeds of a financial operation which he had concluded in Prussia. His resentment appeased, Voltaire wrote to Mme Denis: 'It is a good investment, words have been given, princely words, it is true, but they keep them in small things. Princes are honourable; they only deceive sovereigns.'

Thus optimism was shortly to receive a harsh blow. . . Karl-Eugen took the money but neglected to pay the income. The duel started.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand Voltaire, who was still waiting for the first payment, in letters which became more and more urgent played upon his 'failing health', which was not as bad as he would like to have it thought, he died at the age of eighty-five. On the other, Karl-Eugen, who was counting on the imminent death of his creditor, deferred his payment. In fact, each did his best to cheat the other.<sup>2</sup>

In the end, irritated by the Prince's constant evasions, Voltaire decided to ask for the support of his debtor's uncle, Frederick II. He wrote to the King on the 8th November 1776:

'I no longer dare to raise my eyes to you in my utter decrepitude and from the abyss of my poverty. I no longer know where I shall go and die. The reigning Duke of Wurtemberg owes

<sup>1</sup> The Stuttgart library possesses 162 letters from Voltaire on the subject of interests which were in dispute between himself and the Duke of Wurtemberg. In one of them dated from Ferney, 22nd January 1768, we read: 'I am still trusting in your goodness and your equity. I am sure that you will not leave to languish in poverty an old man of 74, worn out with diseases, who has placed his entire fortune in your hands and who has but a few months to enjoy a supplementary pension. . . I have not a son, but I am, Sir, your very humble and obedient servant.'

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire received a smooth and courteous letter from Karl-Eugen dated 20th September 1761: 'It is with pleasure that I shall subscribe to the value of twenty copies of the anthology you have decided to give the public and which will not fail to add to the renown you have already so justly acquired. I should be charmed, Monsieur, if I could have the satisfaction of seeing you next winter at my court and to make your personal acquaintance. It would allow me to convince you of my great and sincere esteem. I am, Monsieur, your very humble and obedient servant.'

me some money which would have sufficed to ensure me a decent burial, he does not pay me. If I dared I would ask for your protection against him. But I dare not. I would rather have Your Majesty as security. Seriously speaking, I do not know where I shall go and die. I am a little, shrivelled Job on my Swiss dunghill and the difference between Job and myself is that Job was healed and ended by being happy . . .'

The King, although well informed as to the 'poverty' of his former Chamberlain,<sup>1</sup> this poor Job whom he knew to have an income of at least 180,000 livres — nearly £120,000 in 1938 values — agreed to intervene. On the 27th November he informed the mendicant: 'I have written to Wurttemberg to help you collect a debt which is known to me. I think that I should warn you, however, that I am not in very great favour with His Highness and that moreover the said Highness turns a very deaf ear every time his creditors harangue him! We will do, however, what we can. It is strange that destiny has decreed that I should become a consolator of philosophers.' A little later Frederick II, as an honest broker, told Voltaire of the lack of success he had achieved in his negotiations. 'I send you herewith a copy of the reply I have received from the Duke of Wurttemberg. This prince, who tends to the sublime, wishes to imitate the great powers in every detail and since France, England, Holland and Austria are all riddled with debts, he wished to place his Duchy in the same category. Were it to happen that one of these powers went bankrupt I do not guarantee that as a point of honour he would follow suit.' The King, probably to show his correspondent that he had profited by his lessons in irony, adds: 'Do not let these miseries trouble the security of your days. At peace in the palace of the sages, you can

<sup>1</sup> Frederick II wrote in fact to his sister at Bayreuth on the 21st November 1754: 'His [Voltaire's] greatest worry is caused by a lawsuit he has just had with the Duke of Wurttemberg to whom he has lent 50,000 crowns. The Duke found the contract usurious, I think that he is keeping back the interest and thus puts the poet in the position of Harpagon crying for his money bags. It is a great pity that with so much talent this madman should be so wicked and cantankerous, but it must be consolation for animals to see that a man with so much wit is not very much better than they are.'

contemplate from that exalted height the defects and weaknesses of human nature.'

Karl-Eugen, still nursing the hope that he would soon hear of the death of his moribund creditor, played for time. He paid with words, promises and, when absolutely necessary, in bills on account, borrowing the sums from the bankers Turkheim in Strasbourg, at a rate of interest exceeding that which he paid to his importunate lender.

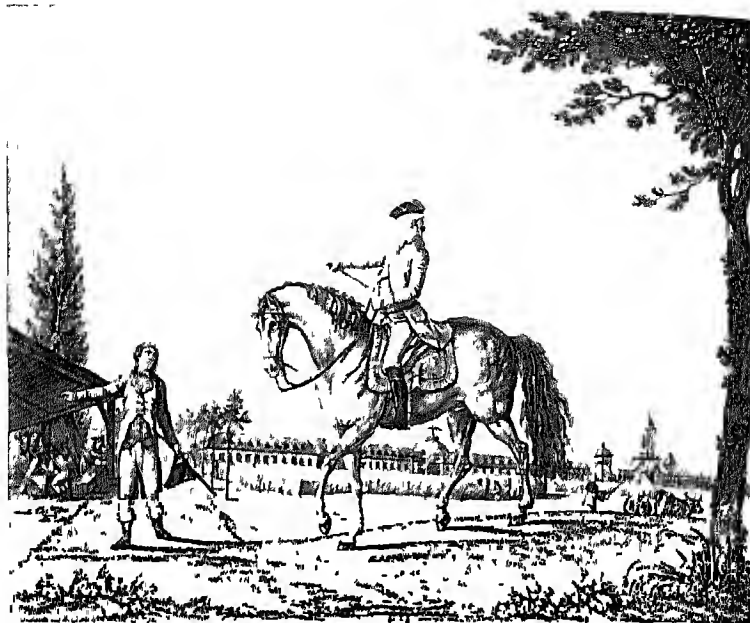
Throughout his life Voltaire was an impenitent litigant. He pleaded at the bar of opinion as at the bar of the Law Courts. He pleaded the cause of his theatre, his tales, his pamphlets and lampoons, he pleaded against the Jesuits and the Jansenists, the believers and the philosophers, the nobles and the people, the politicians, the ministers, the poets, the prosodists and the critics. For twenty-three years he pleaded his case against Karl-Eugen, putting in the bailiffs, obtaining mortgages on goods, vineyards and saltmarshes which Wurttemberg possessed in Alsace. He even tried one day to sequester the castle of Montbéliard (the County of Montbéliard was not ceded by Wurttemberg to France until 1793) which he would have made his residence had he not preferred the more temperate Ferney to the rude climate of the Juras.

One thing is quite definite. Voltaire got the better of Karl-Eugen, and there was good reason for him to be called an usurer. He had lent the Duke 620,000 livres and received in exchange, over a quarter of a century, annuities which can be valued at 1,800,000 livres.

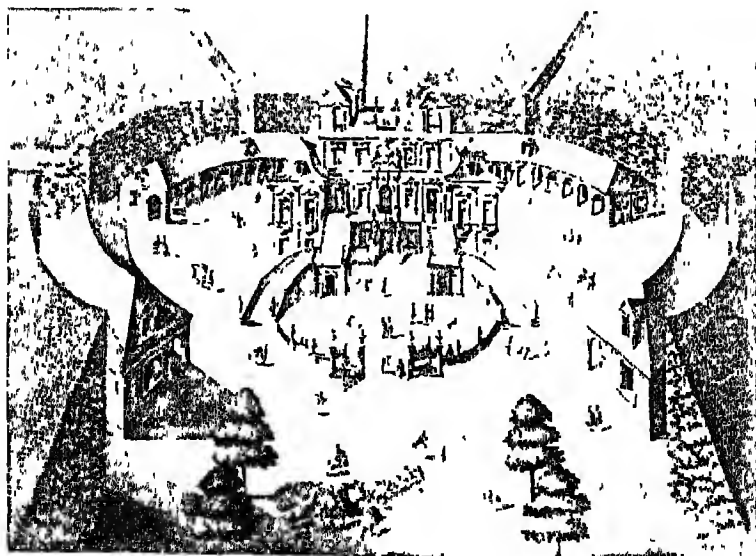
The last method used by Karl-Eugen on a grand scale with brazen cynicism to buttress his failing budget was the sale of soldiers to foreign countries and to France in particular. Louis XV, always eager to enter into alliance with the small German states—the Palatinate, Ansbach, Cologne, Mainz, Bavaria, etc.—signed a treaty with Wurttemberg in 1752 by the terms of which that country had to furnish 6,000 infantrymen to the French Army at the outset of any campaign. In exchange for this conditional service, Karl-Eugen received in peace-time 15,000 livres per thousand equipped men, a subsidy which in time of war was to be in-



Karl-Eugen of Württemberg, by Pompeo Batoni



Karl-Eugen inspecting the construction of Schloss Hohenheim



La Favourite, by A. Cochin



## THE COURT OF KARL-EUGEN

creased to 70,000. Between 1752 and 1756 the Wurttemberg collaboration cost France a million and a half livres. At the outbreak of the Seven Years War the King of France realized that he had been the victim of a consummate piece of knavery. The Stuttgart ally brought very little help, its troops marched unwillingly against Prussia, they mutined, and abandoned their posts in such great number that in order to bring back the deserters peasants had to be recruited to police the roads. Throughout the campaign Karl-Eugen himself played a particularly dishonest role and managed to remain outside the struggle. As Casanova sums up quite rightly 'the great subsidies which the King of France was foolish enough to pay the Prince had merely allowed him to indulge in luxury and his debauches. This Wurttemberg Corps was magnificent but throughout the war it was only distinguished by its mistakes.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not difficult to imagine the scandal caused in Berlin by the presence of Wurttemberg troops in the ranks of Prussia's enemies. In the old days Frederick had thought to form his nephew's mind, the pupil now gave little satisfaction to the master<sup>1</sup>.

Karl-Eugen also sold to Holland troops destined to campaign at the Cape of Good Hope, he sold others to England for the War of Independence. This profitable business demanded an army of crimps to impress the human cattle. Schuller's father, who in a professional capacity witnessed the enrolment, relates that the recruits showed little enthusiasm to join up for these far-off campaigns. When it was reported to the Duke that most of them protested against the inadequacy of the pay offered, he roared: 'Cannon fetches nothing.' On the threat of being led to the gallows in case of refusal, the dissentients fell silent. The Duke could then add in a mealy-mouthed tone: 'You see, you boobies, that I do not force your hand and that you now consent to leave of your own free will to please your father.'

Karl-Eugen, intent upon wielding absolute power, always had

<sup>1</sup> Wimpffen maintains that the Wurttemberg troops were 'the finest in the world and the best disciplined he had ever seen'. By this the courtier probably meant that they wore rich uniforms and were impeccable on parade.

recourse to mediocrities to carry out his unpleasant tasks, he obtained, in fact, the ministers he deserved. Shortly after coming to power (1755) he dismissed the wise Haidenberg, the Regent's collaborator, replacing him by J-J Moser. The newcomer soon fell out of favour. He opposed his master's pleasure with too much frankness and reacted too energetically against the tax abuses practised on the people. Moser was sent to meditate for five years in the dark prison of Hohenweil, he was confined in a cell without being allowed to read or write.<sup>1</sup> The Duke then placed the destiny of his country in the hands of his favourite, Colonel Riegler. This son of an obscure pastor wheedled his way into favour by his absolute submissiveness and his ingenuity in devising new pleasures. During the Seven Years War he was accused of treason, unmercifully thrashed by the Duke at a full military parade and incarcerated in the fortress of Hohenasperg.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, in 1760 Karl-Eugen raised to the rank of first minister Count Montmartin, whose base servility and skill in conjuring up money were the reasons for his success.<sup>3</sup>

Thanks to the introduction of a poll tax, not unlike the present-day income tax, Montmartin succeeded in five years in bringing several million into the treasury. During the ministry of this statesman, who eventually had to resign as the result of a public outcry, the Wurttembergers, harried by the tax collectors and condemned in cases of concealment to the heaviest fines, lived

<sup>1</sup> J-J Moser (1701-85), Professor at the University of Tübingen, is the author of several hundred treatises on political economy and international law. At the end of the Seven Years War the former Wurttemberg Minister, on the intercession of Frederick II, obtained his release and by a singular volte-face saw himself overwhelmed by his executioner with marks of persistent favour. His son, Karl-Friedrich (1723-94), a famous polemicist, published news-sheets in which he attacked, with the frankest and wittiest cruelty, most of the small German potentates of the period.

<sup>2</sup> Riegler later managed to prove his innocence, returned to favour and was even given command of the fortress in which he had been subjected to the utmost brutality.

<sup>3</sup> Montmartin, from a French family of Protestant refugees, served at the Court of Bayreuth and subsequently at Vienna. Entrusted by Maria Theresa with a diplomatic mission to Stuttgart, he made himself agreeable to Karl-Eugen who, as his town quarters, gave him the palace once inhabited by the brother of the Gravenitz.

through a period in which they were sorely tried.<sup>1</sup> Six thousand of them were reduced to such poverty that they emigrated to America. According to Dr Burney, 'half the population of Württemberg consisted of violinists and theatre folk, the other half of beggars and paupers.' K.-E. Moser maintains that at Stuttgart 'one met only people who lived in the hope of better times'. And he adds: 'The court is on the verge of bankruptcy. All the rags and the finery mask hearts full of care.' Universal animosity was felt towards the sovereign. In 1776 the people revolted, attacked Ludwigsburg and sacked the opera. The troops dispersed the demonstrators and the Duke promised a few reductions in taxation, a promise, incidentally, which he showed no haste to fulfil. A sequence of scandals broke out at the Court of Stuttgart and were commented upon in Berlin, where Frederick II was furious. 'The Duke,' he wrote on 7th September 1768, 'enjoys disorder and seems determined to leave his successors a ruined country.'

And then came the day when the cry arose: 'The country is in danger!' The Estates of Württemberg instituted a tribunal to control the sovereign's expenditure. They drew up their remonstrances. Karl-Engel did not take these threats seriously and viewed them as *l'écrit majesté*. In order to nip a tiresome conflict in the bud he went to Venice for the winter. But flight was no remedy for the disaster. The Imperial Diet, alarmed in turn, sent Commissioners to Stuttgart who, faced with an enormous deficit, ordered wholesale economies. The Duke, greatly dismayed, implored the help of Prussia and Frederick II managed, not without difficulty, to find a solution. The care of providing for the most pressing bills was entrusted to a Finance Council with full powers to dispose of the realizable assets.

<sup>1</sup> Schiller took his revenge on the hated minister by pillorying him as the President in *Kabale und Liebe*. The heroine of the play, the mistress of a small German sovereign, forced by her lover to marry an officer, indignantly refuses the wedding presents of the prince on learning that they were purchased with money obtained from a sale of soldiers to England. Many of the scenes in this dramatic comedy are taken from life and transposed from accounts furnished by the poet's father.

## Karl-Eugen Reformed



At this moment of impending tragedy (1770), fate placed in Karl-Eugen's path a young woman who, in the course of a few months, was to bring about an incredible change in his character and lead him back on the right way.

This good angel was Francisca Theresa, daughter of Baron Bernardin, a poor squire of ancient lineage.<sup>1</sup> She had been married for five years to a certain Baron von Leuthrum, who was 'ugly, stupid and rich, a monster who slept in his boots and was only gallant when in a state of intoxication' <sup>2</sup> From their first meetings Karl-Eugen fell head-over-heels in love and determined to remove the victim from the clutches of her hideous husband. In exchange for a lucrative post, this unpleasant character agreed that divorce proceedings should be started immediately. In January 1772, even before the Courts had pronounced the dissolution of the marriage, Karl-Eugen wrote to Francisca in terms that testified to the sudden change which had come over him. 'Most virtuous lady—what is the height of happiness on earth except to recognize the joy afforded by a moral life? I realize the divine gift which has been bestowed upon me in your person to prove a solace for my old age.' In return he received this short note from the young woman: 'There are no terms to express the respectful love I feel for my venerable *Vaterchen*.' The Duke was forty-four years old at this time!

Apartments were immediately prepared for the new mistress. She was to reside at Ludwigsburg in the house which Eberhard-

<sup>1</sup> She was born in 1745 at Schloss Adelsmannfelden near Aalen

<sup>2</sup> Baroness d'Oberkirch *Mémoires*

Ludwig had given to the Gravenitz,<sup>1</sup> and in Stuttgart in the palace once occupied by various favourites from the Gravenitz's brother to Montmartin, and which the Duke now transformed into 'a *bonbonnière* decorated with incredible art and lavishness'.<sup>2</sup> In 1775 Francisca, by the grace of the Emperor and in consideration of a payment of 7,000 florins, became Countess of Hohenheim, the name of a property near Stuttgart which the Duke had presented to her in the previous year.

Mine d'Oberkirch, always indulgent when it came to members of the Württemberg family who admitted her into their circle, depicts in the most flattering terms 'the beautiful Francisca', the epitome of 'all the talents and of all the graces'. of extraordinary intelligence and charming wit, an exquisite and noble simplicity, a good woman with no vestige of hypocrisy.

In actual fact, the girl—she was twenty at the time—was exceedingly plain. Her moral character can be clearly seen when one turns over the pages of the diary which she kept in minute detail. She shows herself to be lacking in education, almost illiterate and to have possessed an abominable handwriting. She wrote as she spoke—and she spoke badly, in a German that was almost a dialect. She never managed to learn French although, unknown to the Duke, she received lessons from a French teacher. Her qualities were those of a good, sincere middle-class woman, an excellent housewife entirely absorbed by the small cares of her household. She was a good cook and could make her own dresses and hats. She was never more at ease than in the country playing at being a farmer's wife. One looks in vain in her diary for a single original idea, for some insight into questions of general policy or for a trace of ambition. The facts that she records are hardly worth reading, she had nothing to say and seems to have been a goose. Nevertheless, Karl-Eugen was captivated by the ingenuous charm of this gentle, modest, sentimental woman whose rather mystic piety did not prevent her from showing a gay face to the world. He was also very sensitive to certain qualities which he was surprised to find in his new mistress. To begin with, she had no desire to play a political role and would tolerate none of those in-

<sup>1</sup> Today it is No. 5 Markstrasse

<sup>2</sup> Baroness d'Oberkirch, op. cit.

trigues which had so often caused an upheaval at the Court of Stuttgart. According to Spittler, she exercised her influence on the Duke discreetly and indirectly through her protégé Buhler, whom she appointed Privy Councillor in 1775. Moreover, Francisca was never once unfaithful to her lover during an affair that lasted twenty years. She bore him a sincere love—which incidentally was returned—and, surprisingly, was completely lacking in self-interest. Francisca in fact was the ideal woman for a man who, tired of the ravages caused by a disorderly life, had decided to pull himself together and put an end to his follies.

From the moment that Francisca's influence was confirmed, the Duke, whose *amour-propre* was always susceptible to the least attack, became a debonair prince with no desire for luxury, he dressed simply, and from some strange affection wore a three-cornered hat at least a quarter of a century old.

'He embarked upon an economy campaign,' writes Risbeck, 'with the same ardour he had manifested in the older days for dissipation and frivolous amusements. In this country no more artificial lakes were built on the tops of mountains nor were the peasants forced to fill them with water merely to gratify his hunting whims. No longer were immense forests illuminated and no more fauns and dryads were rounded up to tread nocturnal measures. Gone were the costly gardens where European spring flowers blossomed in the winter. Even the opera where Noverre had staged his triumphs when his reputation was at its height was left to fall into ruin.'

According to Mme d'Oberkirch it was without doubt Francisca who persuaded the Duke 'to think only of the happiness of his people' and who several years later drew from him a public confession, proclaimed in all the parishes throughout the country, in which the Prince admitted his past failings.

'We are men,' one reads in this astonishing manifesto, 'and therefore very imperfect creatures. But the honest man must recognise his faults. I look upon this day on which I enter my fiftieth year as the beginning of the second period of my life. I can assure my beloved subjects that in the future, all the days

which it may please Providence to accord me will be devoted to working for their happiness. In future, the prosperity of Württemberg will be established on solid foundations: the love of the sovereign for his people and the confidence of the people in the affection of their sovereign.<sup>1</sup>

According to Justinus Kerner, the Duke admitted apologetically to his retinue: 'I was an unleashed demon. What is surprising in that? Everyone knelt before me.'

The era of economy had set in. The Estates of Württemberg, reconciled with their ruler, were given full powers— a prerogative so long and so bitterly contested — to fix the rate of taxes and to make the necessary reduction in the number of officials. The lottery introduced by the sinister Montmartin was retained merely because of the important revenue it brought in, but they dismissed half the troops leaving the Duke only 'a superb guard of handsome men in red uniforms'.

The French troupe of comedians, Vestris and Noverre, were dismissed and the *corps de ballet* reduced. Jomelli himself left Stuttgart, considering his collaboration in a declining opera pointless. The Duke now detested costly fetes and spoke of Paris as 'a place of follies'. He intended to devote himself to good works, science, the arts and philosophy. He founded hospitals, a Botanical Garden,<sup>2</sup> a Library and a Natural History Museum, both the latter in the castle itself. To Rome between 1775 and 1782 he sent emissaries such as the Abbé Milon and Jordan, charged with finding him a few good antiques to enrich the new Stuttgart Museum.

But the enterprise which seemed to please him most was the Karlschule, a kind of university bearing his name and which he considered to be the outstanding idea of his reign. The Karlschule, founded at Solitude in 1771, according to Burney, was housed in a building with a façade six to seven hundred feet long. It was demolished before the turn of the century. Its object was the free

<sup>1</sup> The Botanical Gardens occupied the ground situated between the castle, the Riding School and the Palace of the Crown Prince Eberhard's son. In 1810 it was transformed into a barracks and in 1867 became the Hotel zur Post.

## THE DUCHY OF WURTEMBERG

education of three hundred children chosen from among the most talented sons of titled officers or bourgeois soldiers. The pupils wore a pretty uniform, a pale blue coat with black trimmings, white trousers and a cocked hat. They received from non-commissioned officers and academicians lessons in religion, medicine, living languages and gardening. French was taught by professors such as Uriot<sup>1</sup> or by Germans who had spent a considerable time in France. Karl-Eugen wished the new institution to include a selection from the best of his subjects, in whom he saw the future hope of Wurttemberg. According to him the Karlsschule was to become a school of the fine arts, a nursery for architects and decorators designed to replace the artists summoned by him from abroad, as well as a conservatoire to produce the actors and poets he needed. 'Among the pupils', writes Nicolai, 'destined to become actors, musicians and dancers', a troupe was formed which played on a private stage before a peasant audience. When Burney visited the school he recorded the presence of '18 castrati, the court having at its disposal two surgeons from Bologna, experts in this kind of royal manufacture'.

The details of life in the Karlsschule are known from the accounts of pupils like Hoven, Petersen, Scharfenstein and above all Streicher. We learn from their youthful tales that the nobility and the bourgeoisie were segregated. The nobility neither slept, ate, nor bathed with the bourgeoisie. Only the nobles wore silver epaulettes and powdered wigs. They alone had the right to kiss the Duke's hand; the commoners had to be content with kissing the hem of his coat.<sup>2</sup> Discipline in the Karlsschule was severe and on military lines. The pupils had uniform inspection, marched in ranks and were drilled like recruits. The whole day was ruled by a very strict ceremonial. 'At the cry "Eat", everyone ate.'<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Uriot, 1713-88, originally a comedian at Bayreuth, became librarian and lecturer to Karl-Eugen and finally director of the theatre at Nancy, his native town.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard d'Harcourt *Jeunesse de Schiller*.

<sup>3</sup> Berdot *Voyage de Montbéliard à Berlin* (1775). In 1783, Carlotta von Lengfeld, the future Frau Schiller, had attended the pupils' mess and noted in her diary 'The whole appointment of the Academy is charming but the human heart with its innate instinct for liberty has a



this kind of convict settlement, punishments were the order of the day—the bastinado, cells and long periods on bread and water. 'Any misdemeanour earned an entry on a small sheet of paper the culprit had to wear in his buttonhole. The Duke removed this slip and noted the nature of the crime'<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the whole school complete servility reigned. From the pupils were demanded not only hypocritical genuflections but spying and informing. No leave was given and the inmates were cut off from the outside world. Women were excluded from the institution or, according to Schiller, the only ones allowed were of no interest or had already ceased to be of interest.<sup>2</sup>

His Serene Highness, as Karl-Eugen was called, delighted with his new creation, made an almost daily visit to his favourite enterprise. He attended the few distractions which relieved the monotony of these recluses—balls, concerts, fencing or equestrian contests. His tender solicitude for his precious 'bram child' made him attend the lectures, visit the tables at mealtimes, question the masters and distribute his rewards. He presided at the monthly examination which took place with great pomp and ceremony in the presence of the Diplomatic Corps and all the local authorities. In the course of his inspections he was often accompanied by Francisca, whose beneficent role consisted in mitigating the punishments and finding extenuating circumstances for small peccadilloes. In the presence of his mistress, the Prince was sometimes almost jovial. One day he reprimanded a young Count of Nassau for his bad marks. 'If you were in my place,' he said to the boy, 'and I were in yours, what punishment would you inflict upon me?' 'Well,' said the young hothead, flinging his arms around Francisca's neck, 'I would embrace the charming Count—' strange impression of uneasiness at the sight of these young men assembled for their meal. Each of their movements follows a signal from the supervisor. It is painful to see human creatures treated like puppets.'

<sup>1</sup> B. d'Harcourt. Some of these notes have been preserved. They are vaguely reminiscent of the barracks of our days. '24th December 1773. Pupil Gross minor for prevailing upon the charwoman to make coffee in exchange for a shirt. The pupils Schiller and Baz for having drunk coffee in the room of the said charwoman in company with the pupil Gross minor.'

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, *Annuaire de la Thalie Rhénane*, 1784.

tess and say to her, "Leave the poor boy in peace" ' This time the Duke was at a loss

Karl-Eugen put so much heart into this new and unfamiliar role of amateur pedagogue that he was sometimes subjected to irony. The poet Schubart, one of the aristocratic intellectuals of Wurttemberg, paid the price for not bowing like the others to the Duke and refusing to offer base adulation. He had the audacity to call the Karlsschule 'a slave factory' and composed an epigram starting with the historical statement which was far too apposite 'When Denis ceased to be a tyrant he became a schoolmaster . . .' The satirist soon found to his cost how popular this witticism had become. The despot, reappearing suddenly in the frock-coat of the schoolmaster, banished the reckless poet to the fortress of Hohenasperg where he was imprisoned for a whole year in a dark cell, forbidden to read or write, he was then sentenced to five more years' detention, during which he was allowed to receive his wife and a few friends such as Lavater, Nicolai, Goethe and Schiller.<sup>1</sup> Karl-Eugen is supposed to have visited his prisoner in 1779. Schubart at last received permission to collaborate from his cell with a few newspapers and even to publish a volume of verse on condition that he ceded his rights of authorship to the Duke. On the insistence of Frederick II, Karl-Eugen liberated his prisoner after ten years and gave him a cordial welcome, a comfortable pension and appointed him Director of Music in Stuttgart. The moral authority of the Prince over the bourgeoisie at that period was so strong that Schubart felt no resentment towards him. In 1787 he wrote 'I have had a long audience with the Duke. I must admit that he was very affable and promised that, as from today, I shall lead a very pleasant life. All my resentment against this ruler has vanished like clouds in the night.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Schiller who had come with the intention of showing Schubart the manuscript of his first play, *Die Rauber*, arrived under a false name so as to give the critic full liberty of appreciation. After an hour's reading the author, covered with praise, revealed his true identity to the prisoner and the two young men embraced warmly.

<sup>2</sup> Christian Schubart, 1743-91, began his career at Ludwigsburg as organist in the Lutheran chapel. Burney, who met him there, called him one of the greatest masters. The conversation of these two artists was

Francisca for her part, in the same way as Karl-Eugen, was tempted to play the rôle of educationist on the pattern of Mme de Maintenon. In 1772 she founded an institution at Ludwigsburg for the daughters of officers and officials in straitened circumstances. Convinced that the House of St Cyr, at one time a dramatic centre with a European reputation, had been a kind of conservatoire to train actresses, singers and dancers, Francisca decided that all her new pupils should adopt a stage career and replace on the Württemberg boards the foreigners to whom so far they had had recourse. Unlike St Cyr, since costume was prohibited in Francisca's school, here the actors from the Karlschule occasionally had to lend their support to the dramatic performances given by the girls. On such occasions, to avoid a situation which might have become delicate, the girls, according to Nicolai, were forbidden 'to exchange a single word with the men in the wings'.<sup>1</sup>

In 1775 Karl-Eugen decided that Solitude was too restricted a setting for his Karlschule. Possibly he also thought that his supervision would be more efficient if the school moved into the capital. Fischer was ordered to convert the large outbuildings belonging to the castle, so that they could at the same time house the Academies of Science, Arts and Medicine.<sup>2</sup>

not lacking in the picturesque. Since Burney knew no German and Schubart no English, they had to speak in Italian or Latin. Later Schubart became a man of letters and several of his poems were set to music by Burney. He finished his career as editor of an important newspaper, *Patriotisches Archiv*, which appeared at Augsburg and had numerous French subscribers.

<sup>1</sup> The Institution, transferred later from Ludwigsburg to Solitude, was considered too costly by Karl Eugen and was closed in 1784. The Prince persuaded his wife to devote her attention to running her orphanage at Schloss Hohen, this was later moved to the Altes Schloss in Stuttgart and finally to Ludwigsburg.

<sup>2</sup> In the wing nearest to the Residenz, a hall called 'The Little Temple' has preserved its decoration and period furniture intact. Karl-Eugen used to take his meals there when he spent a day visiting his school. A few other rooms of the Academy still possess their ceilings and stuccoes.

## Schiller and Karl-Eugen



The success of the Karlsschule was soon broadcast by the European press. Foreign pupils flocked to it. Among the young men who began their studies there, two were to achieve fame. Cuvier<sup>1</sup> from Montbéliard and, in particular, Schiller. The conflict which ensued between the poet and the Duke was so involved that it seems necessary to give some details here.

Schiller had come to Ludwigsburg with his father, a barber-surgeon in a hussar regiment, who had retired there in 1766. The boy, hardly seven at the time, had often met the potentate in all his majesty dressed 'in a narrow little gold-branded head-dress, his ringlets ending in a wig, a scarlet coat, a waistcoat with yellow brandenburgs, nankeens and high hessians . . . riding in a coach with eight horses, preceded by eighteen mounted trumpeters'.<sup>2</sup> The luxury and dissipation of Ludwigsburg, then at their height, offended Schiller's sensibilities, and far from arousing his admiration, merely shocked him. For the first time he was faced with these powerful ones, human idols whom later he would call 'the Gods of the earth'. He discovered that a wide gulf lay between the life of the great and that of the people, of whom he was one. He looked at them with envy, and the tremor of revolt which was to run through all his works was born at Ludwigsburg.<sup>3</sup>

Schiller was taken by his father to the performances given by

<sup>1</sup> Cuvier was the son of a house steward of Prince Ludwig-Eugen at that time Governor of the County of Montebard, a fief of the House of Württemberg until October 1793.

<sup>2</sup> Justinus Kerner. *Bilder aus meiner Knabenzeit*

<sup>3</sup> Bernard d'Harcourt, op. cit.

the Prince of those vapid, mythological operas with Italian librettos which he did not understand, but which seemed to him to be fairyland. He was bitten by a taste for the theatre. At the age of thirteen he composed a Biblical drama, *Abraham*, and with his own hands made a puppet theatre which he operated in his room to an audience of empty chairs. The boy went to school at Ludwigsburg and studied to be a pastor.

His career was then subjected to a great change. Karl-Eugen decreed that this pupil who figured in his school reports as 'an exceptional candidate' was to be sent to the Karlsschule. 'Heart-broken' at the thought of abandoning his plans for the future, the boy entered the barracks on the 16th January 1776. It was for him the starting-point of a twenty-year ordeal. Everything shocked him in the new life which opened before him. Like Rousseau he had a great passion for nature, and an instinctive horror of a world in which he would never succeed. But it must be recognized that without the 'royal command' and the change forced upon Schiller, he would only have lived the monotonous life of a village pastor and the works that lay fallow in his imagination would never have been conceived. Karl-Eugen by changing the young man's vocation provoked him to revolt, and unwittingly encouraged his genius to blossom.

One can imagine the existence that the formidable Karlsschule held in store for this anaemic, melancholy adolescent in whom the signs of the disease which would eventually kill him were already apparent.<sup>1</sup> Schiller, as the son of an officer, was admitted into the circle of the noblemen's sons, but this privilege gave him little protection from the ill-treatment meted out to the sons of commoners. At the least insubordination he received the same vicious beatings with the cane or the flat of a sword. He suffered more than most under this penitentiary régime and spoke with terror of the 'iron bars' and the insensate methods employed in his

<sup>1</sup> Scharfenstein, one of his schoolmates, who later became a general, has left us a portrait of Schiller. 'He was very tall for his age and his thighs were the same thickness as his calves. He had a very long neck and a pale face with red-rimmed eyes. He was one of the dirtiest boys in the school. How can one describe that ill-combed head covered with curl-papers, with an enormous pigtail which he loathed.'

education: 'March!' he wrote 'That's all I ever hear I would rather be an ox or an ass' The boy rebelled at this brute violence, and yet he had to adopt an attitude of almost crawling humility, under pain of the direst punishment

His studies took a turn which displeased him. He now had to study medicine to become a major like his father—a profession which it was hoped would earn him a livelihood. But he remained poor all his life, even after he had become the leading dramatist in Germany. Schiller's happier moments at the Kailsschule were spent with his father, who retired to Solitude in 1770 with the title of Inspector of Gardens, or when he had a chance to display his histrionic talents in the small troupe recruited from his comrades. It was at a theatrical fête given at the school on the 22nd December 1779 that he found himself for the first time in the presence of Goethe and Duke Karl-August of Weimar, with whom he soon formed a friendship that was to become famous. But he was happiest alone in his room secretly reading the poets Klopstock, Goethe and Wieland, the philosophers, historians, dramatists, and above all, Shakespeare, for whom he conceived a veritable passion. He had already formed the habit, which lasted throughout his life, of turning night into day. Stimulated by coffee and tobacco, he composed verses<sup>1</sup> and planned his plays. He had an innate taste for the theatre and already felt the urge to win renown as a playwright. Without the knowledge of his supervisors, between 1777 and 1779 he worked out the plot of his first tragedy. 'We shall write a play,' he decided, 'which will be burnt in the public square by the hangman.' This declaration of war on the ruling classes was to become *Die Räuber*, a work which, indeed, was considered as incendiary and capable of endangering the balance of society.

In 1780, the final draft of his play being complete, Schiller had it printed at his own expense, borrowing the 150 florins demanded by the printer from his schoolmates. In December of the same year, having reached the age of seventeen, he was considered fit to practise medicine, not in the city but only on his colleagues in

<sup>1</sup> From 1776 he published verses in a Stuttgart periodical *Die Suabische Herkstatt*

the regiment, for a monthly salary of 18 florins. He remained an ordinary soldier — having no title he would never be an officer — and as such had to continue leading the distasteful barracks life, carrying out all the military duties and attending parades in full-dress uniform.<sup>1</sup>

*Die Räuber* caused a great stir on publication. The work, full of the ideas of emancipation which were already in the air, was set in the present and contained allusions to particularly hated contemporaries such as the Minister Montmarin, Süss Oppenheimer, etc. Schiller, immediately hailed as the German Shakespeare, learned that his play had been read by Dalberg, the director of the Mannheim theatre, and he shipped away to that town to discuss the possibilities of its being performed. But Karl-Eugen heard of his escapade. He summoned the author to the castle, confined him to barracks for fifteen days and forbade him to communicate with the outside world or to publish any more poetry or drama. On pain of severe punishment he was warned to confine his activities to his military duties. Schiller, determined to pay no attention to this reprimand, continued to put the finishing touches to his play. Dalberg considered that the original text would have to undergo drastic changes before it could be performed before the public. For fear of a scandal he insisted that the action should be changed from the eighteenth to the fifteenth century and that the characters should be toned down. As soon as the play was ready in its new form, Schiller asked permission to return to Mannheim to attend the first performance. On being refused, and

<sup>1</sup> Scharfenstein has drawn a picturesque portrait of Schiller at this period. 'How comical Schiller looked, rigged out in his uniform cut in the old Prussian manner, which was particularly stiff and hideous in the case of the army surgeons. On either side of his head instead of ringlets he wore three little stiff pomaded curls. His small, military cap was perched on the top of his head and barely covered the nape of his neck, to which was attached a very thick false pigtail. His long thin neck was strangled by a thin horsehair cravat. But the most curious part of his attire was undoubtedly the legs. Thanks to the felt and the stuffing with which he had padded his white garters, his calves looked like two cylinders, broader than his thin thighs encased in narrow trousers. In these garters which were always stained with polish, he walked with the stiffness of a stork unable to bend its knees. This whole garb, so opposed to the idea we had of Schiller, often brought smiles to our little cheek.'

profiting by the absence of the Duke, he got into the coach and left Stuttgart in civilian clothes, indifferent to the almost certain risk of losing his position

On the 23rd January 1782 the author, hidden in the back of a box, witnessed his triumph Dalberg had done things well the actors were good, the production artistic, the décor cost no less than 100 ducats (about £100 today), and a moon, cut from a piece of white metal, caused a sensation when it rose on the backcloth at the moment of Karl's famous monologue 'Hear me, moon and stars!' The aristocracy of the Palatinate, outraged by the young author's audacity, tried to raise a protest We find an echo of this in a letter addressed to Goethe by Prince Putavin the day after the first night. 'Had I been God,' wrote this indignant spectator, 'and on the point of creating the world, and had I foreseen that one day someone would write *Die Räuber*, I should not have created the world'<sup>1</sup> But the majority of the public enthusiastically acclaimed this uncompromising and thinly veiled satire on the excesses of power. We know from the account of a spectator the excitement which ran through the audience as the tragic story unfolded 'The theatre seemed like a madhouse among the audience one saw rolling eyes and clenched fists Raucous cries could be heard Strangers wept and embraced each other, and women as they left the theatre were on the point of fainting'<sup>2</sup>

Schiller savoured his triumph when, in the midst of great applause, he was carried on to the stage

On his return to Stuttgart he was summoned to Hohenheim. The poet arrived suspecting nothing a horse had been put at his disposal for the journey. 'The Duke was walking in his garden Suddenly he sprang on his victim with the savagery of a wild beast which has watched its prey for a long time from an ambush'<sup>3</sup> He hurled at the unfortunate poet's head all the details of his

<sup>1</sup> Goethe *Conversations with Eckermann* (17th January 1827)

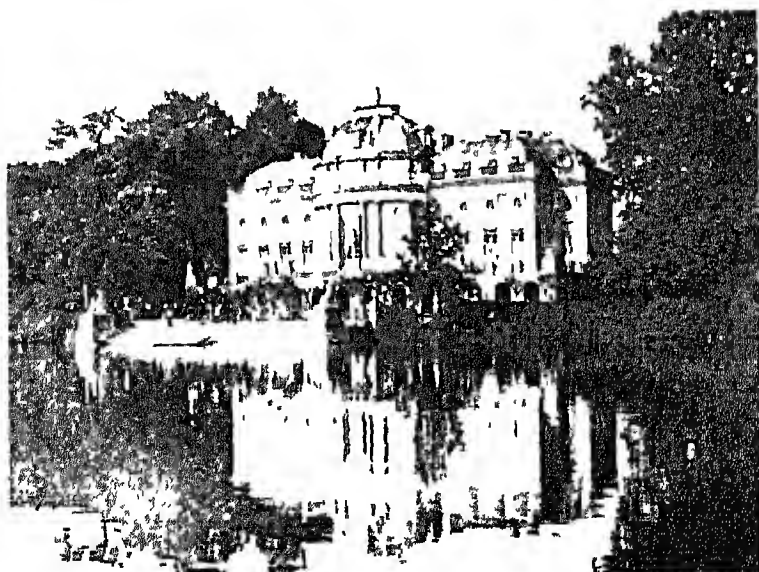
<sup>2</sup> The play, although considered subversive, was soon performed in numerous German theatres—Hamburg, Berlin and Leipzig But in the latter town the playbills were not allowed to remain for long on the hoardings It was not performed in Stuttgart until 1796, two years after the death of Karl-Eugen, and not until 1850 in Vienna

<sup>3</sup> Bernard d'Harcourt *op cit*





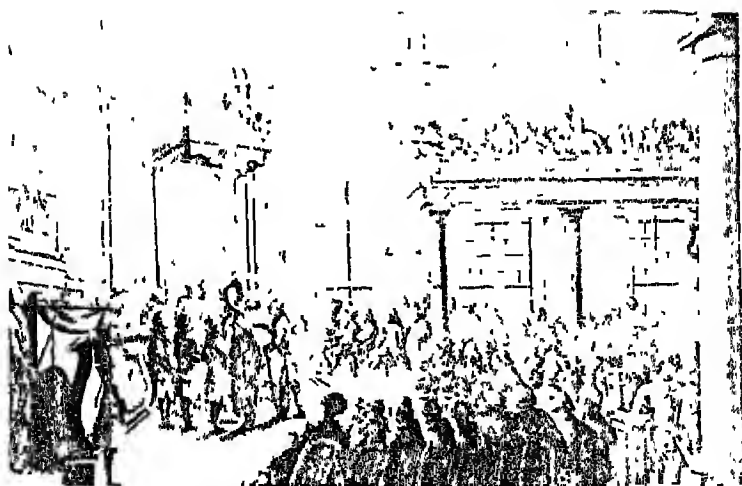
Solitude, about 1780, by V. Heidehoff



Monrepos



Francisca von Hohenheim



Presentation of diplomas at the Karlsschule, 11th February 1782 (Karl-Fugen stands on the dais ; Francisca is seated by the window) By V. Heidehoff

flight, threatened to imprison his whole family and to put Schiller himself in a fortress for the rest of his days. The young man suddenly had a vision of Schimdt's fate. But his courage was unshaken and he remained determined to pursue his literary career, which he felt quite unable to renounce.

One day Schiller decided that the situation had become too strained. His cup was full to overflowing, and his existence at Stuttgart was too full of danger. He determined to escape and confided his plan to his friend Streicher,<sup>1</sup> who for his own part wanted to flee to Hamburg to continue his musical studies. The propitious moment seemed to have arrived when, on the 22nd September 1782, attention was focused on the great night fete which Karl-Fugen was giving at Solitude in honour of the Comte du Nord, the future Tsar Paul I. Without even telling their families the two fugitives, travelling under assumed names, took a carriage at ten o'clock at night and crossed the half-deserted town, they managed to pass the gates, although the false passports they had procured were scrutinized. For their romantic adventure they took with them, apart from the 28 florins Schiller had in his pocket, two small trunks and two pistols, 'one of which', according to Streicher, 'had no pawl and the other no flint'. Needless to add that as regards powder neither was loaded except with our wishes for success. In this way they reached Mannheim. There the author of *Der Rauber* asked Dalberg for some royalties, without success, and learned that Karl-Fugen would pardon him provided he returned to Stuttgart immediately. But the poet did not fall into the trap by trusting to these dubious promises, in fact, he was posted as a deserter and dismissed from his post of army surgeon. In a fine spirit of revolt he accepted his disgrace. For fear of an extradition order he hid with friends in Darmstadt, then at Frankfurt and finally went to ground in a wretched inn at Oggersheim, between Worms and Mannheim. Here he stayed for some time. He did not return to Mannheim until April 1784, to be present at the first night of his new play *Kabale und Liebe*. His characters were only too easily recognizable: the Duke, his sworn

<sup>1</sup> Andreas Streicher—Schiller's schoolmate who always remained a true friend—has written the story of their odyssey.

enemy whom he represented as 'an adept in debauch, an insatiable hyena, scourged by desire and constantly in search of new victims', the Minister Montmartin; Francisca, etc. He pilloried the depraved morals of the Wurttemberg Court, lashed absolutism and postulated the new ideas which already had many partisans<sup>1</sup>

Schiller was not to see his native city again before 1793. By this time, Karl-Eugen, on the point of death, had lost his old resentment and told the poet that he could settle in Ludwigsburg, where he pretended to ignore his presence.<sup>2</sup>

In 1780 the news spread of the death, at the age of forty-eight, of Frederica, Duchess of Wurttemberg, who for a quarter of a century had been little remembered by her former subjects. All attempts made by the families in Bayreuth and Prussia to bring about even an apparent reconciliation between the couple had been in vain. The Duke had transferred to his wife the Schloss Neustadt, promising to spend 50,000 florins in making it habitable, and 4,000 florins on its upkeep. Unfortunately, according to his usual habit he neglected to keep his word and Frederica decided to go and live with her family.

On the death of her mother (1758) she received as a present from her father the Margrave the charming little castle of Fantaisie, situated some miles from Bayreuth, and completely altered the interior and the gardens. She lived a retired life entirely devoted to literature and the theatre. 'Philosophising more from reason than by inclination, showing herself capable of rising above her misfortune by her feelings as she had risen above the malice

<sup>1</sup> For two years Schiller led a vagabond existence, always in need, always haunted by tuberculosis which gradually did its work and killed him. In 1787 he settled down near Weimar.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, in his Ludwigsburg quarters, which can still be seen today, began to compose his *Wallenstein* trilogy during the winter of 1793/4. He wrote late into the night and in order to remain awake worked with his feet plunged in a bucket of cold water, which undoubtedly aggravated his tuberculosis. Sometimes, however, overcome by sleep, he would doze off, and the sculptor Dannecker took advantage of these brief moments to model the features which would serve for the bust of his great friend.

of courtiers by her behaviour.<sup>1</sup> Once at Frederick II's invitation and despite her husband's veto, she spent a winter in Berlin where she enjoyed the flattering homage paid to her by the intelligent men at her uncle's court. Occasionally she travelled and we find traces of her at Ferney with Voltaire to whom she said one day 'I wish you would call me your daughter, for you are my true father.' She flung her arms round the neck of the old man when the latter, having accepted paternity, improvised the following quatrain:

*Où le beau titre que voilà!*  
*Vous me donnez la première des places,*  
*Quelle famille j'aurais là!*  
*Je serais le père des Graces*

The ill health which saddened Frederick's last years aggravated the eccentricity of her character. On hearing of her death Mme d'Oberkirch said 'She was not regretted, she was a strange person, who was able to make neither the Duke nor her own familiars happy.'

<sup>1</sup> Maubert, *op. cit.*

## Schloss Hohenheim



Karl-Eugen, a widower at last, declared that a great weight had been lifted from his mind. A hope which he had nursed for a long time could at last be realized—to make the woman with whom he had lived for more than fifteen years his legitimate wife. He immediately opened his heart to Francisca, and to avoid any misunderstanding between them drew up a statement determining in writing the conditions of their future existence ‘I hope,’ he declared in this curious document, ‘that you will always remain apart from everything, and that you will neither interfere in affairs of state nor in my affairs in general’ A letter, dated 1780, also deals with the religious conflict which might arise between the Catholic Karl-Eugen and the Protestant Francisca. ‘I do not wish to cause you any difficulties regarding your religion, but I ask one thing of you not to succumb to false piety and to follow my advice more closely than ever Believe me, my dear lady, I have already suffered deeply on account of you and because of this.’

Their matrimonial plans, however, ran up against obstacles Rome and the Catholic sovereigns in Germany objected to the Duke’s marriage with a Lutheran At Stuttgart the marriage was received with mixed feelings The Wurttemberg family, deploring the *mésalliance*, was unanimous in insisting that any issue should be declared unfit to succeed to the Duchy Of Karl-Eugen’s two brothers the younger, Friedrich-Eugen, showed appreciation and gratitude to the woman who had brought her lover back on to the right path, but the elder, Ludwig-Eugen, remained implacable The Estates of Wurttemberg, approving the marriage of their prince to a woman who had always shown herself to be good and

charitable, promised him a revenue of 50,000 florins if he married his mistress in preference to some princess of the blood whose influence was to be feared. A compromise was made on the 7th July 1783 in the chapel of the castle was blessed a union which, 'for reasons of state', according to Mme d'Oberkirch, they were forced to keep secret until the following year, when the morganatic marriage was made public. An official ceremony at Stuttgart on the 2nd October 1784 sanctioned it amid general rejoicing.

The newly married couple left for Solitude, to spend a few weeks' honeymoon there.

One might be inclined to think that with his changed outlook Karl-Eugen would have been cured of his mania for building. But his ruling passion had only been dormant. Doubtless the Prince would no longer build vast town or country palaces, which had already brought him to the verge of bankruptcy, but his architects were not allowed to remain idle.<sup>1</sup> From 1779, with the help of Fischer, he finished rebuilding the burnt-out wing of the Stuttgart castle and ordered a theatre called *Das kleine Theater* -- 'very pretty' according to Nicolai, and designed to replace the Opera which had been burned down.<sup>2</sup>

Then for a moment he fluted with the idea of building a hermitage in the valley of Heigerloch, where he had found a delightful site. With regret he abandoned this plan. 'I should like to be poor,' he wrote to Francisca, 'and build a hut on this site.'<sup>3</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> We know Goethe's opinion of Karl-Eugen's architectural works in Stuttgart. 'As far as architecture is concerned, I thought with particular melancholy of everything that Duke Karl could have realized with his desire for grandeur had he been lucky enough to possess a true sense of art and to have found artists worthy of the name to carry out his plans. But one soon saw that here was only a kind of distinguished inclination for splendour without real taste, and in his heyday French architecture, from which he took his models, was itself already decadent' (Letter to Schiller from Stuttgart, 31st April 1797.)

<sup>2</sup> A pediment supported by four columns adorned the very simple façade. The furniture came from Paris (Francisca's diary). Until 1793 operas, ballets and occasionally Shakespeare plays were performed, but above all at the instigation of the new Duchess and as a reaction against the invasion of foreign literature, the tragedies of Lessing and Goethe. *Das kleine Theater* was destroyed by fire in 1802.

<sup>3</sup> C. J. Weber *Deutschland*, 1854.

1781 he bought from his brother Friedrich-Eugen the hunting lodge of Hochberg, which he restored and redecorated. The same year he built at Karlhof, near Hohenheim, a small castle where he and his wife liked to stay for the haymaking. Three years later he repaired the old manor of Schainhausen, leaving it to Francisca to decorate the interior.<sup>1</sup>

Karl-Eugen however devoted all his attention to the creation of Hohenheim, which was to become Francisca's favourite abode. Here she gave free reign to her talents on the farm.<sup>2</sup> Until the Renaissance, a castle belonging to the family of the famous alchemist Theophrastus Paracelsus had existed at Hohenheim. In 1768 the Duke bought the half-ruined manor, demolished the remains and caused a French park to be designed in the vicinity, called the Gartenhof. In 1771 he gave this property to the singer Bonafini, the last but one of his mistresses, and in 1772 to Francisca, whom he considered as his wife from the day when the divorce had delivered the girl from her tiresome husband. On a visit to London with his mistress (1775), the English gardens came as a revelation, to him and at Hohenheim, over a period of fifteen years, he accumulated about sixty of those 'fripperies'—pavilions, kiosks, and cottages—demanded by the tyrannical and dubious taste reigning at that time in Europe. In an area of 23 acres there arose a woodcutter's hut built of coarsely assembled pine-logs and consisting of a small bedroom and a library which Francisca noted in her diary as being her favourite retreat, a *pavillon de Fantaisie*, a mill, including the miller's quarters and a large mahogany-panelled hall, a gaming-hall, a Swiss chalet; a hermitage with its Gothic church perched on a cliff above a water-

<sup>1</sup> Francisca's diary. Schainhausen, which Karl-Eugen called 'my retreat', occupied an agreeable site in the upper valley of the Lorch to the north-east of Stuttgart. The castle, flanked by two pavilions, the work of Fischer, is vaguely reminiscent of a Palladian villa. The exterior has been preserved intact. No trace remains of the original decoration except in a dining-room in the right wing and a bathroom in the left wing, still used today as a potting-shed. In the park one can still see on a small hillock a temple with twelve Doric columns, erected in 1788.

<sup>2</sup> Hohenheim is six miles from Stuttgart in the Lorch Valley, near Ploeningen with a view of the Swabian Alps.



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fall, a boudoir, hidden in a green island in the centre of a lake upon which swans glided, etc.

Thus was not all Karl-Eugen discovered a taste for antiquities on a journey to Rome and Naples in 1774-5. He wished Hohenheim to evoke the memory of the monuments which he had found most striking. From now on, in the few square yards still available, appeared a Roman villa with its baths, Nero's villa, a prison with its dungeons and an inn over which hung a sign *Alla Città di Roma*, a Temple of the Sibyl with a very fastidious interior, a Temple of Vesta surrounded by a chaos of rocks, a Temple of Mercury, a few fragments of the wall of the Baths of Diocletian, the Pyramid of Cestus, three columns of the Temple of Jupiter Tonans, and near them, oddly enough, a small concert hall. One can imagine the nauseating effect produced by these miniature ruins, which the Chevalier de l'Isle called *des antiquités mentouses*,<sup>1</sup> transplanted into a Nordic setting and isolated from each other only by a few curtains of trees.

Nevertheless, the park of Hohenheim found grace in the eyes of many visitors who have left us most enthusiastic descriptions. The Prince de Ligne, the greatest aesthete of his time, declared that Karl-Eugen's creation 'was both magnificent and rare'

'The garden,' he says, 'is in the best taste and the most marvellous one can imagine, it embraces more than sixty different ideas . . . the finest of the Italian monuments have been carried out in the proportion of 4 to 1. . . The Duke, to give an original touch, has joined to each of these monuments a little dwelling which looks like a peasant's hut complete with tools, bunk and kitchen. And in the midst of all this, where it is least expected, there is a most luxurious salon, sometimes in the best taste . . . All the paths leading from one building to the other are edged with flower-beds containing the rarest flowers. Everywhere are charming places of refreshment, where big windows look out upon beautifully tended lawns. The concept and the detail contrived by the Duke are most ingenuous. One would think that a colony, coming upon the ruins of some Roman

<sup>1</sup> *Lettres au prince de Ligne sur la cour de France*

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settlement in this region, has made use of the buildings to live in them.<sup>1</sup>

Mme de Genhs, fleeing from Paris in 1789 with her niece, passed through Wurttemberg, and after visiting 'the magnificent and charming gardens of Oheim' [*sic*] was moved to philosophize: 'The general plan is as ingenious as it is picturesque, it is bound to impress in particular the French *émigrés*, for the diverse buildings represent the vicissitudes of fate and human life'

Many tourists of the period, however, seem to have been dismayed by this incredible jumble of ruins, temples and palaces, alternating with gloomy dungeons and rustic chalets. They could not understand 'what fantasy would dare to unite in a single whole such disparate objects'. Goethe, who once said 'economy is the most necessary expression of order', was shocked by the waste of imagination and money in which Karl-Eugen had indulged. He notes acrimoniously in his diary that he has just seen 'a series of monstrosities created by a disturbed and insignificant imagination. At Stuttgart, Hohenheim and Ludwigsburg, far too much money has been lavished, and too little good taste.' He concludes 'So many little things, unfortunately, do not go to make a big one.'<sup>2</sup> Finally Nicolai is surprised at 'these dairies without mulk, this hermitage without hermits'. True, having neglected to get permission to visit the park he was not allowed in and admits that he speaks of these curiosities from hearsay alone.

In 1782 Karl-Eugen became restless only a few rooms of the dairy farm had so far been in use and he felt the need for quarters worthier of him. Fischer therefore had to produce plans for a castle which, on his master's instructions, was to have nothing in common with Ludwigsburg or Solitude as regards sumptuousness but should be a big country villa worthy of a prince. The first stone of the new building was laid only on the 24th June 1785.<sup>3</sup> To make up for the time lost the work, which the Duke inspected

<sup>1</sup> Prince de Ligne *Coup d'œil sur Belœil*, 1786

<sup>2</sup> Goethe's journal, September 1797

<sup>3</sup> According to Francisca's diary, the stone bore the architect's plans engraved on a silver plate with an inscription denoting the Duke's intention to preserve the rustic appearance of the castle

three times a week, was carried out at great speed. It was finished in 1787.

Schloss Hohenheim, the greater part of which still stands today, is a huge building consisting of a ground floor and a first storey. We share the opinion of Goethe, who described it as being 'architecturally cold and characterless . . . it is difficult to find anything really good about it. . . . The castle is one of the most unedifying sights in the world. One might say of the exterior that it was built without taste for it arouses no vestige of sympathy or antipathy.'

After crossing a courtyard, closed in the old days by a wrought-iron gate, and embellished with lawns, one reaches the main building. A fine antechamber leads to a big central hall (originally decorated with marble, which displeased Goethe). From here one enters the former picture gallery which the Duke filled with a few good canvases borrowed from the Ludwigsburg collection (Goethe reports a Titian, a Rembrandt and a fine Holbein portrait), then the library, panelled with white-and-gold wood where Karl-Eugen placed some of Lejeune's finest works—the statue of Apollo<sup>1</sup> and two large bas-reliefs, 'Meditation' and 'Silence',<sup>2</sup> and four groups representing the Seasons by Dannecker. The left wing of the castle continued through a very long orangery leading to a winter garden (these two rooms have been destroyed) and ending in the dairy farm, with a sloping roof. Francisca occupied four rooms on the first floor.<sup>3</sup> They were converted into a kitchen in the nineteenth century. The entrance courtyard was flanked on one side by the stables and the riding school,<sup>4</sup> and on the other by a chapel dedicated to both the Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The interior decoration of Hohenheim was entrusted to the

<sup>1</sup> Commissioned for Solitude—it was first placed by the Duke in the Hohenheim Palace at Stuttgart and later in the picture gallery of Ludwigsburg where it remains today.

<sup>2</sup> Destined at first for Solitude, they went to the Hohenheim library and from there to the Conference Hall in the Stuttgart Castle.

<sup>3</sup> The main room has preserved its stucco decoration with wreaths of roses and the repeated initials of Francisca von Hohenheim, another room still possesses its original plaster fireplace. It was in one of these small attic rooms of the dairy farm that Karl-Eugen died in 1793.

<sup>4</sup> Only the riding school remains, converted into a hay-barn.

stucco worker Isopi,<sup>1</sup> who, probably in great haste, carried it out in an icy classical style. One looks in vain for those 'charming ornamental motifs in such excellent taste' of which Schiller speaks.<sup>2</sup> The Duke insisted that Isopi should use some of the pupils from the Karlsschule. The result hardly does credit to the artistic teaching given at the school. Part of the furniture was borrowed from various ducal residences at that time abandoned but most of it was bought in Paris.<sup>3</sup> Schiller extolled 'its elegant magnificence, with excellent taste allied to prodigality.'

Francisca's diary depicts the rustic existence led by the couple at Hohenheim. Karl-Eugen was attended by only one chamberlain, a head groom and a chaplain. His wife had no ladies-in-waiting and there were very few servants. The Duke, who was in robust health, got up early, hastily gave a few necessary signatures and then embarked upon his favourite sport—horsemanship. He took a meal in some local farm and before midday returned to his study where, for two hours, he dealt with affairs of state, dictated, and read the newspapers. Francisca 'dressed in a quarter of an hour', and her peasant garb allowed her to perform small tasks in the garden, or to make plum jam, at which she excelled. Then she strolled in the park, followed by her favourite sheep on a leash of silver ribbon, and fed the swans. She administered her domain as a shrewd farmer's wife and never allowed anyone else to buy the cattle. Her happiness was complete when she could earn a few florins by selling the produce of her vegetable garden or the fish from the ponds. She liked to read and draw in the Roman Inn or to panel the walls of her apartment with materials from a factory of her foundation.

The couple, after inspecting the greenhouses (soon to be the most famous in Europe),<sup>4</sup> the hives, the sheepfolds, the sowing or the haymaking, stopped to lunch in the woodcutter's hut, the Swiss chalet or the mill. The afternoon was devoted to long rides

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Isopi, an Italian by origin, worked at Stuttgart until 1832.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 30th August 1797.

<sup>3</sup> Francisca's diary.

<sup>4</sup> They were copied from those of Potemkin in St Petersburg. Lang noticed a number of fig trees and flowers in bloom at all seasons. 'It is a fairyland,' he says, 'where magnificent trees grow in the open, shrubs on the walls, in all the colours of the rainbow. A real enchanted grotto.'

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in a carriage or on horseback through the neighbouring woods. They would go as far as Busnau,<sup>1</sup> a royal farm surrounded by charming gardens which Karl-Eugen had given to Francisca in 1778, to the Lasanengarten<sup>2</sup> or to Lausiedel, a hunting lodge and stud farm. Immediately after supper, at which he ate well and drank little, the Duke retired to bed.

On certain anniversaries, small rustic f6tes were given and the clearing in front of the Roman Inn served as a setting for peasant dances, the distribution of provisions, and finally a modest fire-work display.

One evening Karl-Eugen, charmingly attentive towards his wife, wished to give her the surprise on waking of seeing the study next to her bedroom redeccorated with a new wallpaper. He insisted that the workmen should wear slippers and use only screws instead of nails so that no noise should betray his plan.<sup>3</sup>

When he was forced to leave his wife for a few days, he wrote her tender billets-doux - he was then sixty - in which he called her 'little angel' and 'my sweet companion'. Sometimes to the note he attached a heart cut out of paper which he surrounded with the phrase 'For thee alone'.<sup>4</sup>

The peaceful monotony of these idyllic pleasures was only disturbed by the occasional visits of royal guests. On these occasions the pride of Karl-Eugen came to the fore and his wild extravagance showed, as Bunney so rightly says, that 'his vocation for economy was more apparent than real'. In 1777 the news spread that the Emperor Joseph II, travelling incognito under the name of Count Falkenstein, was to pass through Stuttgart. Great preparations were made to receive him. It was then learned that the noble visitor, refusing the Duke's hospitality, had ordered rooms in one

<sup>1</sup> Busnau, to the north east of Vaihingen, still exists today.

<sup>2</sup> Lasanengarten - the Pheasantry - a few miles from Hohenheim on the Echterdingen-M6hlningen road - was built by Friedrich-Eugen, Karl-Eugen's brother, as a farm to raise gamebirds. A little Temple of Flora, rising in the middle of a lake, gave it its name of La Floride. Its owner called it Lasanenhof when, in 1796, he built a villa where he spent several weeks a year. The *K6nigliche Staatssammlung V6terin6rmedizinischer Altert6mer* of Stuttgart possesses a charming picture showing the house and the park.

<sup>3</sup> Risbeck op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Francisca's journal.

of the city's inns. Karl-Eugen devised a stratagem to force the Emperor to lodge under his roof. He had the façade of the castle covered with a huge panel bearing the sign *Herberge Zum Roehmischen Reich*. He disguised himself as the innkeeper and dressed his courtiers as valets. This courtesy, says Bachaumont, 'quite French in sentiment, did credit to the German prince and achieved its merited success' <sup>1</sup> Karl-Eugen took advantage of the opportunity to try and obtain the title of Princess of the Empire for his wife. The Emperor turned a deaf ear, making as the excuse that he could not increase indefinitely the number of beneficiaries who already held this title.

On another occasion, in September 1782, the court of Stuttgart was in a state of great excitement at the arrival of Grand Duke Paul of Russia, the future Tsar Paul I, only son of Catherine the Great, with his wife, the daughter of Prince Friedrich-Eugen, Karl-Eugen's younger brother. No expense was spared to dazzle these illustrious visitors although they were travelling incognito as the Comte and Comtesse du Nord. Karl-Eugen went to meet them at Montbéliard where Friedrich-Eugen was governor. At Stuttgart a triumphal arch awaited the procession. On a lawn, where among other visitors present were the Dukes of Zweibrücken and Hesse-Darmstadt, a performance was given of the opera *Les Fêtes Thessaliennes*, with a libretto by Uriot and music by the Italian Poli, followed by the ballet *Callirhoé*. The following day was spent at Hohenheim. The visitors inspected the site chosen for the building of the new castle, strolled through the park, stopping at the hermitage and the baths, and laying the first stone of a monument to commemorate their visit in front of the woodcutter's hut. Next day they were driven to Ludwigsburg where they visited the porcelain factory and attended a ball at the opera house.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires Secrets*, 25th March 1777. When the Emperor left Stuttgart he made fun of the threadbare coat and dirty boots of the postillion who drove him. 'It is easy to see', he said, 'that this fellow is not a courtier.' At the first relay he tried to recompense the valet but could not get him to accept the slightest reward. The Emperor understood the motive for the refusal. The coach, which had been put at his disposal, belonged to Prince X who, to pay homage to his illustrious guest, had himself acted as the postillion. (Biedermann *Die Mode*)

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The programme of festivities included a series of entertainments at Solitude. The guests drove along a brilliantly lit avenue to the castle which, according to Mme d'Oberkirch, the Comtesse du Nord's lady-in-waiting, seemed to be the 'Le Palais du Soleil'. The same writer is unsparing in her praise of the Italian opera given that evening and the great supper served 'in the "Laurel Gallery"', where the statues, vases, well-laden tables and the profusion of lights were a magnificent sight<sup>1</sup>. On this occasion the Duke had acquired from Paris a complete suite of furniture<sup>2</sup> and did the honours of his splendid domain to his illustrious niece, while excusing himself for past extravagance. 'I repent, I repent, madame, but I was carried away by my youth. I did not think enough of my people who need constant thought. Today I build no more palaces, I build almshouses'<sup>3</sup>. And the Comte du Nord replied, to allay his uncle's scruples. 'Monsieur, it is not so foolish to build palaces as you maintain. The grandeur of princes is that of their people also. All the money you have spent here has given work and, in consequence, wealth to your subjects.'<sup>4</sup>

The following day's programme included hunting on the Barensee. Stands had been erected round the lake so that the guests could see the arrival of four thousand stag and does, trotting in a herd. It was an incredible sight. The hunters were enthusiastic but the spectators were moved by the unfortunate creatures, sacrificed in advance, and butchered in the most horrible manner. Wagons full of game were taken away and presented by the Duke to his guests.<sup>5</sup> When the visitors took leave of their hosts on the 25th September 'everyone wept'<sup>6</sup>.

Since Karl-Eugen had changed his way of life he had felt a renewed urge to travel. In the old days he had considered it as mere excuse for pleasure but now it was an opportunity to educate himself. We meet him wandering all over Europe. He spent the

<sup>1</sup> Francisca's diary.

<sup>2</sup> Mme d'Oberkirch. *Mémoires*. Karl-Eugen admitted that a single one of these fetes given to the Comte du Nord cost him 550,000 florins.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>5</sup> Francisca's diary.

winter of 1774-5 in Italy with Francisca. She wrote down her impressions of the journey in her diary and related some curious excursions such as the climbing of Vesuvius. In 1781 the Duke decided to tour Germany incognito<sup>1</sup>

The couple passed through Karlsruhe and Bruchsal, the residence of the Bishop of Speyer, and Frankfort, they stopped at Cassel to visit the famous picture gallery and the no less famous baths, and at Hanover, where the library held their interest for several weeks. At Schwein a pleasant surprise was in store for Francisca. She was invited to dinner by the Duchess of Mecklenburg, *née* Princess of Wurttemberg. At Jena, Karl-Eugen met Karl-August of Weimar. The latter gave an account of this meeting to Goethe. 'The Duke of Wurttemberg,' he wrote, 'was here yesterday. You know that he explores all the universities and likes to see all the faculties parade, or rather, prostitute themselves before him. But he offers them quite an amusing spectacle in return, an old hussar general with a big round Swabian head and a formidable moustache is ordered to follow the lectures assiduously and to take notes. He swears and storms but he obeys.'<sup>2</sup>

In 1782<sup>3</sup> Karl-Eugen and Francisca reached Ansbach, where they were well received, but avoided Bayreuth, which still held too many memories of an unhappy marriage. They crossed Switzerland where they studied the manufacture of printed cloth with the intention of founding similar workshops in Wurttemberg. At last they reached Vienna. The Emperor refused to receive themorganatic wife and merely deigned to meet her 'by chance' at Laxeuburg. Francisca was not to be received at the Imperial Court until 1791, the year in which the Pope officially recognized her marriage.

In 1789 Karl-Eugen was in Holland and Denmark, in whose

<sup>1</sup> On leaving Stuttgart he had intended to stop at Schloss Weillingen and visit his brother Ludwig. The two brothers had been on bad terms since Karl-Eugen's marriage to Francisca. He gave up his plan when he learned that Ludwig would be delighted to see him but without his wife.

<sup>2</sup> *Correspondence of Goethe with Duke Karl-August of Weimar*, 2 vols., 1856.

<sup>3</sup> From this year onwards the Prince kept a diary of his travels. It has been published.



capital he found little of interest. 'It is a town devoid of all luxury,' he wrote. He then travelled to England. Francisca, being a Protestant, was presented to the Royal family. Her jewels, which were valued at a quarter of a million livres, caused a sensation at a dinner given by the Prince of Wales. The young woman conquered London society by her simplicity and the grace with which she wore her 'shepherdess's bonnet'. Karl-Eugen devoted his time to serious tasks, visiting the universities. He did not spare his criticisms.

'At Cambridge,' he notes, 'the students have far too much liberty and obtain permission too easily to stay out at night. This is very dangerous.'<sup>1</sup> His judgements on England show a certain perspicacity. 'Most of the English live in opulence. They do not realise that, beyond the sea, people think. The Englishman is dry and always phlegmatic. He easily forgets services rendered and too often neglects what he might have learned on his European travels. The masses have an easy life, luxury is very widespread, agriculture is in a good state, the Navy magnificent, the army weak and undisciplined.'<sup>2</sup>

The couple often made Paris the goal of their travels. On the first journey to the capital in 1776 Francisca was cold-shouldered by the Count at Versailles and Marie Antoinette wrote to her mother on June 27th 'The Duke of Württemberg takes his mistress everywhere. She is rather a sickly looking Countess.' Such severity is surprising, for although the girl lacked beauty, she was undoubtedly well dressed. The Duke had her dressed by the Queen's dressmaker, Mlle Rose Bertin, who enjoyed a European reputation. 'The Opéra was severely criticized by the two tourists, who found the music 'too noisy and lacking in taste'.

The Duke's second journey to Paris in 1787 caused him to utter a few melancholy reflections. 'And thus ends our journey in one of the greatest cities in the world where religion, knowledge and respect seem forgotten but where dissipation and frivolity hold sway. All the enthusiasm and sentiments are superficial.'

In 1789, at the outbreak of the Revolution, the couple were once more in Paris visiting the theatre, even attending the per-

<sup>1</sup> Karl-Eugen's diary

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*

formance of a topical play *La Prise de la Bastille*. They were surprised to notice that the stalls once occupied by gentry had now been invaded by the rabble. That such a radical change in the customs of a nation could have been brought about in the space of two years thoroughly bewildered Karl-Eugen. In summing up his impressions, with a certain clairvoyance he diagnosed the extreme danger in which the monarchy stood. 'France,' he wrote, 'is in her death throes. Every means, even the most energetic, seem powerless to revive her. A weakly king, a queen who indulges in all manner of eccentricities, justly detested by the people, ministers who are not capable of their tasks, these are the pillars on which this crumbling realm rests.' According to him, from the moment the King agreed to take orders from those to whom he should have been giving them, catastrophe was imminent. Out of prudence the Duke sported a tricolour on his hat. But in spite of this precaution he was recognized on the Cours la Reine and jostled so violently by the *sans-culottes* that he had no wish to prolong his stay in a place where he could be subjected to such indignities. In 1791, on their return from London, the couple passed through Paris for the last time while it was in full revolution. Out of curiosity Karl-Eugen attended the sittings of the National Assembly, a step which earned him the reproach of having 'sold himself to the Jacobins'.<sup>1</sup> This accusation was unfair for, if at the outset the Duke wished to be initiated into revolutionary theories, he was quick to manifest an implacable hostility towards them.

With the object of sparing Wurttemberg the reprisals which France might have tried to take on a country so close to her frontiers, he received with distrust only a small number of French *émigrés*. He would only receive officially a member of the House of France, the Prince de Condé, their head. In 1791 he allowed the prince to stay for several weeks with his family in an inn on the Stuttgart-Mannheim road.<sup>2</sup>

For several years now Karl-Eugen had suffered from violent attacks of gout and his health was on the decline. It was said that his death was hastened by an incident during a *ridotto* given at

<sup>1</sup> D'Espinchal *Souvenirs*

<sup>2</sup> Augéard *Mémoires*.

## SCHLOSS HOHENHEIM

the Karlschule, when predictions, written in the pure style of the Parisian Revolutionary Club, were distributed by three figures in fancy dress who slipped away before they could be apprehended. At the age of sixty-five, after a reign of nearly fifty years, Karl-Fugen died at Hohenheim on the 23rd October 1795. Francisca nursed him tenderly and did not leave his bedside for six nights.<sup>1</sup> His subjects mourned him and remembered only his repentance. The poet J. Keiner gives a striking picture of 'the immense procession of horses galloping across the silent countryside by torch-light', on its way to Ludwigsburg where the Prince was laid to rest. And when this nocturnal cavalcade had disappeared in the dusk and darkness, symbolical of the tumultuous existence of an unbalanced prince, the bewildered eyewitness wondered if he had not been the victim of one of those tragic and mysterious visions which so often haunted the German imagination.

Francisca retired to Schloss Bachungen in Bavaria. The Duke had given her this castle in 1790 as a refuge in case Wurttemberg should be invaded by the revolutionary armies. In 1796 she had to flee before the French troops, and stayed for some time in Vienna. As soon as the danger was over she settled permanently in Schloss Kirchheim, a legacy, together with a pension of 20,000 florins, from her late husband. In a portrait dating from the last few years of the century she appears, at the age of fifty, as an austere and respectable woman, tending to stoutness. Her nun's coif would make the stranger take her for some old, rather dreamy, sister. She died in 1811.

<sup>1</sup> Francisca's diary

## Karl-Eugen's Successors



On Karl-Eugen's death the throne passed to his brother Ludwig-Eugen, at that time aged sixty-two. As a young man he had served in the French Army, distinguishing himself during the Minorca campaign and particularly in the capture of Mahon (1756). The Prince was stationed in Paris and his correspondence shows that he wrote French correctly and with wit.<sup>1</sup> He was a well known figure in the fashionable salons, of which his favourite was that of M. de la Popelinière, the ostentatious Maecenas of the Château de Passy, at that time the rendezvous of the greatest artists and wits. He knew Buffon, La Tour, Rameau and J.-J. Rousseau, with whom he corresponded in 1760. He was on very good terms with Voltaire. 'I love you,' he wrote to him in 1755, 'from the bottom of my heart and with a tender friendship. You say, monsieur, that I am an exile and you cannot see why I should serve France. I think that I am in a better position here to render important services to my country than by remaining at home.'

The Prince led a very dissipated life in Paris and according to the scandal sheets was constantly to be seen in the wings of the Parisian theatre, 'often laying down the helmet of Mars to break a lance in the lists of Venus'. He was credited with numerous affairs, among others with Mlle Gaussin,<sup>2</sup> star of the Théâtre Français who created Voltaire's *Alzire* and *Zaïre*, with Mlle Guéant of the Comédie-Française, Claron's mistress, and with Mlle Coraline, for whose favours Casanova was his rival.

<sup>1</sup> He wrote verses and read them quite charmingly, according to Mme d'Oberkirch.

<sup>2</sup> Mlle Gaussin when reproached for her facile morals replied, 'What would you? It gives them so much pleasure and it costs me so little.'

During the Seven Years War he offered his services to Austria and fought in the ranks of Prussia's enemies.<sup>1</sup> The Prince de Ligne, who met him during the campaign, speaks of him as 'a most amiable man who composes and recites verses admirably'. One day he quarrelled with Marshal Daun (the general in command of Maria Theresa's army) as the result of an epigram, in which he occasionally indulged out of gaiety or impatience. The Duke in fact had a taste for the pun, 'the wit of people who have none', according to Voltaire.

Ludwig-Eugen at the age of thirty had an attack of conscience rather like that which had overcome his brother. He gave up his military career, turned his back on the gay life which Paris had made so attractive for him, and returned to his own country. He gave Voltaire the reasons for his sudden retirement: 'You tell me that life in Paris is more suited to myself than to you. The brilliant pleasures to be found there fail to tempt me. I wish for something more solid. . . . The charming fetes in Paris seem to me insipid and gloomy. I find a terrible void unworthy of any thinking man.'

Ludwig-Eugen decided never to recognize Francisca as a sister-in-law and was forced to leave Stuttgart. At first he lived in Schloss Weitingen near Hanau, and then in Switzerland, leaving his family in ignorance of his whereabouts (the Château de Renan in the Vaud). He intended to live there peacefully with a charming Saxon woman, Countess von Beichlingen, whom he had just married, and Voltaire, with whom he was on friendly terms.

'I have come to live in Switzerland so that I can wear my country clothes,' he wrote to the sage of Ferney. 'Moreover I am happy with my gentle wife who has won my heart. . . . We are passionately devoted to each other. By day she is my friend, at night I am her lover, and we only remember that we are married because it sets a seal on our happiness, and makes

<sup>1</sup> Frederick II in 1753 got wind of Ludwig-Eugen's hostile intentions and confided to his sister in Bayreuth on the 23rd June of the same year: 'I fear that he will commit a stupidity. I hear from Paris that he intends to enter the services of the Empress. He is irresponsible, I might say mad. I foresee nothing good for him.'

## THE DUCHY OF WURTTENBERG

us cherish all the more the bonds which join us You see, monsieur, that in this respect it is easy for me to be a little philosophical. The glances from her black sparkling eyes would express far more vividly than my humble pen the gratitude she bears you for the interest you are kind enough to take in our well-being She hopes, when her health allows it, to come and see you at Ferney, to pay to you homage which I am sure you will not find displeasing . . . I have just learned that I am in your debt for the excellent chocolate I have been drinking for some days It is the most suitable present for a married man; my wife, too, is most obliged to you.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner had he taken possession of the Duchy of Wurttemberg than he instituted some reforms From his long stay in Paris he had retained a very active taste for French culture He spoke French more willingly than German and his manners bore the stamp of that urbanity and tone so characteristic of the Court of Versailles Thus in 1794 he closed the Karlsschule which he considered infected with the Prussian spirit, and far too costly into the bargain. He was the implacable enemy of the new ideas and at the outbreak of the Revolution this aversion changed into such a violent hatred that he wanted to join the coalition against France at the head of his troops

Ludwig-Eugen died in May 1795 from an attack of apoplexy whilst walking in the park at Ludwigsburg His reign, which is of little account, had lasted only two years The two daughters of his marriage to the Countess of Beichlingen were brought up in a Parisian convent<sup>2</sup>

The throne of Wurttemberg passed to Karl-Eugen's second brother Friedrich-Eugen, who at that time was sixty-three years

<sup>1</sup> Letter of 1st February and 20th March 1763 During his stay in Switzerland the Prince became the father of two girls On the birth of his first daughter he wrote to Voltaire (29th June 1763): 'Now new duties have been imposed upon me So far I have tried my best to be a tender husband, I shall now make every effort to fulfil my duties as a good father My happiness will endure because I have nothing to reproach myself with This happiness is not based on the misfortune of others and I feel that I enjoy the inner satisfaction which is the greatest of all joys'

<sup>2</sup> Mme d'Oberkirch *Mémoires*

old. This prince was originally destined to be a churchman but Frederick II had dissuaded him from this vocation and he had become a soldier. Promoted to General in the Prussian Army, as husband of the Princess Sophia Dorothea of Brandenburg-Schwedt (a niece of Frederick II) in 1769 he was appointed governor of the County of Moutbéliard, a possession of the House of Württemberg. He held court in his small capital surrounded by a large family of eight sons and three daughters. 'He joined the ranks of the great men who tried to become enlightened,' says Goethe, 'asking advice on the education of his children from the most famous pedagogues of the period. He wrote one day to J-J Rousseau whose famous reply began with these words: "Were I unfortunate enough to have been born a Prince . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich-Eugen had little time to enjoy his power. The French Army under Moreau invaded Württemberg in 1796. The Duke was forced to flee and take refuge in Ansbach. He returned to Stuttgart only to die there on the 25th December 1797.

He was succeeded by his son Friedrich II, whose majority was declared in 1803. This prince, two years later, was to face the thunder of Napoleon. The Emperor, during the campaign which was to terminate with the capitulation of Ulm, notified Friedrich that he would visit him at Ludwigsburg on the 31st October 1805. Dazzled by his magnificent reception, Napoleon said to his host with a smile 'I am not sure whether I could ever entertain you so magnificently.' He conquered the Duchess by a few graceful compliments, praised the Duke to the skies and admitted that he had not met such an enlightened prince in the whole of Germany. Such rare capacities, he declared, were out of proportion to a country which held such a small place in the European concert. He promised that he would change the title of Duke of Württemberg to that of King. The charm worked and Friedrich, filled with gratitude, proclaimed his host to be 'charming and the equal of Frederick the Great.' The ground having thus been prepared, the Emperor began to discuss the matter which had brought him to Ludwigsburg. After meeting with strong resistance he persuaded the Duke to declare war on Austria and to co-operate in the cam-

<sup>1</sup> For Rousseau's letter, cf. page 266

paign by furnishing 8,000 Wurttemberg troops. The reward was not long delayed. In the following year, 1806, Friedrich-Eugen was given the title of Friedrich II with the pretentious Gothic addition of Emperor of Swabia and King of Wurttemberg, in other words of the smallest kingdom in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Friedrich II, proud of his new title, seemed anxious to emulate the youthful follies of his uncle, Karl-Eugen, whose unbounded vanity and lust for pleasure he had inherited. The petty despot exercised his authority down to the smallest details, to the point of forbidding his subjects to smoke in the street. An enormous eater, he soon became so disgustingly fat that a piece had to be cut out of the table so that he could sit down.<sup>2</sup> Napoleon said that he always arrived in Paris *ventre à terre*.

He wished to leave traces everywhere of his artistic taste—in Stuttgart, in Ludwigsburg, La Favorite and Monrepos. With the disastrous encouragement of his favourite architect Thouret, the interiors of these palaces were deprived of most of their pretty eighteenth-century decorations. The Empire style triumphed. The gardens succumbed to the rigours of the prevailing fashion and were transformed into English parks.

After Friedrich II's death in 1816 Ludwigsburg remained uninhabited for many years. Fortunately time in its work of destruction forgot it, and the castle, thanks to skilful restoration undertaken at the end of the nineteenth century, has to a great extent preserved its original aspect.

Hohenheim suffered the gravest vicissitudes. Ludwig-Eugen, who made it his favourite residence, had preserved it intact. But in 1797 Friedrich-Eugen dispossessed it of all its art treasures in favour of Ludwigsburg and Monrepos; then for reasons of economy he demolished several of the main buildings and most of the fripperies that adorned the park.<sup>3</sup> The devastation was completed at

<sup>1</sup> In 1807 his daughter Catherine married Jérôme Bonaparte, who that year became King of Westphalia.

<sup>2</sup> At Solitude one can still see Friedrich II's desk, hollowed out in a semicircle to fit his stomach.

<sup>3</sup> All that remains of these buildings are the Roman inn, the gaming house, and the cells of the Roman prison. One column survives of the Temple of Vesta, the Swiss chalet, the mill, the woodcutter's hut and the dairy farm have disappeared.



the end of the same year when the Revolutionary armies turned it into a barracks and a military hospital. Today, Hohenheim is an agricultural college. Its gardens exist but bear no resemblance to the original.

As for Solitude, already 'very neglected and ruined', according to Nicolai who visited it in 1781, it suffered but little from Thourer's reconstruction and the interior still remains almost as Karl-Fugen conceived it. Solitude remains one of those places which most vividly evoke the figure of a small German despot of the eighteenth century.



## PART III

# The County of Montbéliard



## The County of Montbéliard



It is important to cast a glance at the County of Montbéliard unless one wishes to overlook a chapter in the history of Württemberg which provides a few highly amusing characters.

For a long time the province of Montbéliard was a kind of small sovereign state. Originally the apanage of the Montfaucon family, descendants of the old Count of Alsace, a branch of Habsburg Lorraine, it passed to Württemberg on the marriage of Eberhard IV (1394) to the last heiress of the Montfaucons. Nevertheless, it continued to be ruled according to its own laws. At the end of the seventeenth century Prince Friedrich of Württemberg found himself head of the reigning branch of Montbéliard.

Montbéliard, in German Mompelgard, a mountainous region bordering on Switzerland, forms an enclave in French territory. From the ethnological and political point of view it was a compromise between France and Germany. Although French blood flowed in the veins of its inhabitants, German infiltration had conquered the region, favoured by the Protestant religion generally practised there, and, above all, encouraged by the German princes who governed it. Customs were entirely German, the men wore long beards and old-fashioned surtouts. Civilization had stood still. The terms of an Imperial decree laying down a code of behaviour for 'cadets and young officers of Alsace and Montbéliard when invited by a prince' seem to be addressed to young brutes, ignorant of the most elementary rules of *savoir-vivre*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This decree, dated 1624 and preserved in the National Archives, shows the apprehension felt as regards the behaviour of these young men.

(1) Respects must be paid to His Highness in correct attire (coat and boots) and young officers are not to arrive half-drunk.

## THE COUNTY OF MONTBÉLIARD

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the capital of the County possessed a main square, into which several streets converged, and suburbs of ill repute where it was dangerous to wander at night. It was an agglomeration of one- or two-storeyed houses with huge roofs pierced with mullioned windows such as can still be seen in Alsace. The interiors were very simple, with wooden cottage furniture. In the main room, which also served as a kitchen, the people lived a sober existence, their staple diet being onion soup and flour pancakes.

Until 1699 the ruler of Montbéliard was Duke Georg, the husband of Anne de Coligny, the great-granddaughter of the famous victim of St Bartholomew's Night. One of Louis XIV's journeys led him through this small country. Mlle de Montpensier, who was in the party, describes in her memoirs the impression produced upon the royal suite by the appearance of the ruler who had ridden out to pay homage to the royal traveller.

'When we left for Sainte-Marie-aux-Mines,' she writes, 'a petty sovereign came to greet the King. It was the Prince of Montbéliard-Württemberg. I found him hideous. He was dressed like a village schoolmaster, without a sword, and his lumbering carriage was painted black because he was in mourning for the Empress. The horses had black cloths reaching to the ground, the pages and lackeys were dressed in yellow with trappings of red ribbon. I remember that his whole court was in the same carriage and that ten or a dozen people emerged from it to pay their respects.'

Duke Georg lived up to his appearance and was in fact, if not

(ii) At table, they must not lean back in their chairs or stretch their legs out to full length

(iii) They must not drink after each mouthful because they would get drunk too quickly. After each dish, half-empty the tankard and before drinking carefully wipe the moustaches and the lips

(iv) They must not stick their fingers in the dish or throw the bones over their shoulders or under the table

(v) They must not lick their fingers, spit in the plate or wipe their noses on the napkin

(vi) They must not drink like brutes until they fall under the table or cannot walk upright, etc (Montbéliard Archives K 1755)

actually mad, 'a great eccentric' Steeped in a nebulous mysticism, he had composed a hermetic bible for the use of his heir, based on the strangest educational principles But that was not all For some reason, according to Mme d'Oberkirch, he made his son learn Arabic instead of French and German, and entirely warped his judgement, particularly on marriage, by giving him the Koran instead of a breviary 'In this false book the boy found justification and an excuse for his debauches and his perpetual change of women and mistresses, which offended respectable people, were the shame of his reign and his own undoing as we shall see'<sup>1</sup> In fact he profited so well from these paternal lessons that he became polygamous and encouraged incest in his own family

The education of Leopold-Eberhard, born in 1670, son of this Duke Georg, was therefore both Moslem and neglected At the age of twelve he was incapable of reading German In 1688 hostilities broke out between France and Austria (War of the Augsburg Coalition), the French armies entered Montbéliard, which for several years found itself incorporated into French territory Duke Georg was forced to leave with his son for Silesia He took refuge with his daughter, Eleonora Carlotta, the reigning Princess of Oels, near Breslau<sup>2</sup>

At the age of twenty-three Leopold-Eberhard entered the service of Austria and was in command of Tokay when the Turks laid siege to that city Given the reputation of being a great soldier for having repelled the enemy, he acquired a taste for the military profession and took part in several of the campaigns in Hungary. He lived at Oels when his presence was not needed with the army There he met the daughter of a Lignitz baker, Anna Sabina Hedwiger, who was employed as a servant at the court This young woman, 'of great beauty and a character as noble as it was disinterested, inspired a great passion in Leopold-Eberhard She soon became his accredited mistress' (Mme d'Oberkirch) As soon as signs of pregnancy were visible her lover made her marry in all

<sup>1</sup> Mme d'Oberkirch *Mémoires* We shall have occasion to borrow largely from this author who, having lived at the Court of Montbéliard in the second part of the eighteenth century, was able to collect some very savoury details regarding the characters of this story

<sup>2</sup> This small principality was a dependency of the House of Brunswick

## THE COUNTY OF MONTBÉLIARD

haste a Heil von Sedlitz (21st May 1695) On the arrival of a second child the unfortunate husband, aware that he had played as little part in this birth as he had played in the first, and rebelling against having to share his wife, requested and obtained an annulment of the marriage

The husband having gracefully retired, the Duke decided to marry his mistress The ceremony, celebrated secretly at Rejoutz in Poland on the 31st May 1696, was a mixture of tragedy and comedy Since the affair had to be conducted in the utmost secrecy the bride appeared at the altar disguised as a man In the marriage lines the couple were only mentioned by their initials and the priest, refusing to bless the union of two people whose identity he did not know, found himself forced to continue the service at the point of a pistol The marriage was not made public until the 1st June 1697, it was then proclaimed with all appropriate solemnity Nevertheless, Leopold-Eberhard's love-life was soon to become exceedingly complicated. We shall try our best to throw some light upon this family unbiogho and to show it in all its strange monstrosity.

A certain Curie, a Montbéliard tailor, had married the daughter of a butcher from the same town. By this woman he had a son and four daughters who were as 'beautiful as the day and as witty and able as they were beautiful' (Mme d'Oberkirch) One day this tailor abandoned his needle for the sword and attained the rank of captain in the Lorraine army, according to the prevailing custom he had taken as *nom de guerre* the name of L'Espérance The hazard of the campaigns—or rather some astute *arrière pensée*—brought him to Posen in Silesia escorted by his daughters, whom he managed to introduce to Leopold-Eberhard The arrival of the de l'Espérance girls was the beginning of poor Anna Sabina's troubles. The Duke, seduced by the wiles of these dangerous sirens, thought of nothing except how to keep them with him. 'It was not easy,' writes Mme d'Oberkirch, 'for their lowly birth excluded them from almost everything' Leopold-Eberhard overcame these difficulties He obtained from the Emperor Leopold I the title of Baron of the Empire for the father This title embraced the whole family, which found itself raised above the rank of



commoner. 'This difficulty overcome,' goes on Mme d'Oberkirch, 'the Prince introduced the ladies to his wife, Anna Sabina Hedwiger. At first they pleased her very much. They were well brought up and talented, possessing grace, gentleness and charming characters, they showed her great respect and lavished attentions upon her.' Leopold-Eberhard, not content with his first success, soon suggested that the sisters should be admitted into the house as ladies-in-waiting. The all-too-credulous Anna Sabina, 'still not suspecting the truth, in other words her husband's passion' asked for some days to think the matter over. 'She soon had a presentiment and refused the offer. The Prince insisted, she obeyed him with her usual docility, but with a certain repugnance which the future would justify only too soon' (Mme d'Oberkirch). In fact, the Prince became enamoured of Sebastienne, the eldest of the de l'Espérance girls, 'a tall, majestic blonde with soft and winning manners, and with a most alluring and languishing expression in her large blue eyes'. He fell madly in love with her.

This idyll continued after the Peace of Ryswick (1697) had put an end to hostilities between France and Austria and, eventually, to the exile of the Princes of Montbéliard. In 1698 Duke Georg returned to his estates and sent for his son.

The future must have appeared unclouded to Leopold-Eberhard. The amazement caused at Montbéliard by the triumphal entrance of the young couple, escorted by four Baronesses de l'Espérance, soon died down. Anna Sabina, well received by her father-in-law, despite her plebeian origin, lived in the castle as hereditary princess. (In her luggage she had, of course, brought a child who guaranteed the continuity of the family line.) Moreover, Sebastienne de l'Espérance was content to exercise her power over her lover behind the scenes. But Montbéliard was shortly to witness a scandalous romance which aroused protests from foreign courts and made the whole of Europe laugh.

Anna Sabina was soon to see her suspicions of her husband's infidelity confirmed. The latter, suddenly losing all restraint, openly showed his passion for Sebastienne de l'Espérance by presenting her with the castle of Séloncourt and naming her

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'Maîtresse d'hôtel at the court, a post previously given only to ladies of the highest rank'.

At this point, on 21st May 1699, Duke Georg died and Leopold-Eberhard inherited Montbéliard together with considerable domains from his mother, Châillon-Coligny. In order to give his outraged wife at least a sop to her self-esteem, he badgered the Emperor until he obtained for her the title of Countess of Sponeck, a title which devolved upon the children and her brothers who, of course, automatically became Counts <sup>1</sup>

The new Countess could not for long conceal the jealousy which her rivals inspired. Moreover she was subjected to the greatest brutality by the Duke, who one day even beat her and left her for dead in her boudoir. 'To remove the cause of his wife's jealousy, Leopold-Eberhard pretended to be interested in the sister Polyxène.' She was the youngest of the de l'Espérance daughters, 'one of Nature's masterpieces'. The Duke, by playing this comedy, became so enamoured of the charming creature that he simultaneously deceived his wife and his mistress Polyxène, according to Mme d'Oberkirch, 'encouraged him to the greatest follies. But she soon died in the flower of her youth [1708]'.

Leopold-Eberhard behaved with these four women exactly as Louis XV was to behave with the de Nesles sisters. In fact, at the same time that he was having an affair with the eldest and the youngest of the de l'Espérance girls, he publicized his passion for the second, Henrietta Edwiga, a 'passionate and fiery brunette, often gloomy and jealous to the point of uttering threats and all the more dangerous because, fundamentally, she was self-controlled, very aware of her own interests and very prompt to see where those interests lay' (Mme d'Oberkirch). The Duke's intrigue with the third of the sisters was already of ten years' standing. It had started at Oels while the Montbéliard family was still in exile. Leopold-Eberhard, after making Henrietta Edwiga twice a mother, had married her in February 1697 to a Silesian count,

<sup>1</sup> This Imperial accolade at the same time rewarded Georg-Wilhelm, Anna Sabina's brother, for his loyal services in the army. Sponeck was the name of a castle situated on the banks of the Rhine in the region of Breisgau and was a dependency of Montbéliard.

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Johann Ludwig von Sandersleben, a gentleman of his suite. During the first years of this union two sons were born who bore the name of Sandersleben. In 1701 the husband, having doubts on the paternity of his offspring, and not without justification, obtained a divorce. Leopold-Eberhard legitimized Henrietta-Edwiga's two eldest sons, adopted the two younger, gave all these bastards the name of Sandersleben, brought them back to Montbéliard, and presented them with estates in the County of Coligny.<sup>1</sup> The Countess of Sponeck's patience was now at an end. After resorting to reproaches which merely irritated and soured her husband, she retired to her own apartments and refused to share her life with this prince who was devoid of all principles and whose mistaken ideas from the Koran had obviously turned his head. Finally, treated with almost unparalleled insolence, she recovered her dignity and banished from her presence at the first opportunity these contemptible women, the cause of her misfortunes. The same evening she asked permission to leave the court with her children and to live in future far from those who had insulted her. Leopold-Eberhard agreed and they separated by mutual consent in 1709. He gave her for her lifetime the enjoyment of the Castle of Hélicourt and its dependent lands, rights and revenue (Mme d'Oberkirch).<sup>2</sup> The Countess of Sponeck was 'much beloved in Montbéliard. The entire court escorted her to her new domain—forty young horsemen from the most honourable families in the town, including the Prince of Montbéliard-Oels, Leopold-Eberhard's own brother-in-law. This incident aroused great rage among her enemies, Henrietta Edwiga nearly suffocated with rage' (Mme d'Oberkirch).

Suddenly, at the end of 1709, Henrietta Edwiga, the favourite of the moment, died. Leopold-Eberhard, recovering swiftly from the tragedy, conceived a great passion for Elizabeth Charlotte, the last member of the de l'Espérance family. 'She was a small,

<sup>1</sup> For his two adopted children the Duke obtained French naturalization from Louis XV—the domain of Coligny being on French soil. The eldest received the County of Coligny in Burgundy, the others were given Baldenheim and other Alsatian fiefs. The former took the name of Sandersleben-Coligny and the latter de l'Espérance-Coligny.

<sup>2</sup> The property of Hélicourt is a mule and a half from Montbéliard.

dainty, charming creature, gay, frivolous and carefree, she lived entirely for pleasure. She sang and danced from morning to night and had not an iota of sense in her head' (Mme d'Oberkirch)

This new adventure was to embroil the Duke further than he had anticipated. Five years sufficed for the new favourite to gain complete control over her lover and the moment arrived when, in order to obtain legitimacy for her children, she insisted on no less than marriage. The Duke, completely outwitted, agreed to the ultimatum and on the 6th October 1714 published his divorce 'on the grounds of incompatibility of temper' with Anna Sabina, whom he now called his 'widow'. On the 15th April 1718, in a room at the Montéblanc palace, he morganatically married Elizabeth Charlotte de l'Espérance, named in the marriage lines as 'my reigning spouse'.<sup>1</sup> Anna Sabina only learned this news, which had long been kept secret, on her return from a journey to Denmark where she had visited her brother Sponeck recently appointed general and Governor of Copenhagen.

It now remained for Leopold-Eberhard to ensure the future of the five children he had by this new wife—two others were to be born later—and to arrange the civic status of the son and daughter of his first marriage. He was most punctilious in legitimizing Anna Sabina's two bastards, and even more so when it came to the progeny he had heaped upon Elizabeth Charlotte.

He thought that he had found a clever scheme to achieve the required results. Approaching his relation, Eberhard-Ludwig of Württemberg, the lover of the Grävenitz, he offered him the succession of the County of Montbéliard in exchange for a recognition of the legitimacy of all the fruits of his adultery. The two cousins met at Wildbad on the 18th May 1715. The Duke of Württemberg insisted upon the forfeiture of any rights to paternal heritage for the three sets of natural children: those of Countess Sponeck, those of Henrietta Edwiga and those of Elizabeth Charlotte, in

<sup>1</sup> In the divorce document Leopold-Eberhard granted to his ex-wife the Chateau de Blamont, the surrounding lands and a pension of 4,000 livres. In the event of Sabina remarrying, the gift of Blamont was revoked and the pension reduced to 2,000 livres. The repudiated wife continued to live in complete retirement at Héricourt, where she died in 1735.

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consideration of which he offered them a joint revenue of 12,000 florins and agreed that an attempt should be made to obtain for them the title of Counts of the Empire

A treaty to this effect signed in May by the contracting parties was ratified in September. Then in October, as an extra precaution, young Sponeck was summoned to Lindwigsburg to guarantee under oath the execution of the contract.

Leopold-Eberhard, satisfied that by this treaty he had ensured the future of his eleven children, now lived surrounded by his heterogeneous family in the palace of Montbéliard. This mediæval manor built at the edge of an escarpment had been half-demolished in 1677 on the orders of Louis XIV, its far from comfortable rooms were heated by tall German stoves.

His court was undistinguished and only a desire to be surrounded by a host of courtiers accounts for the great number of high dignitaries it comprised.<sup>1</sup> At table, if we are to believe certain household accounts, an extraordinary number of dishes were served.<sup>2</sup> Occasionally he went out at night on escapades, finding his pleasure in thrashing the guard or the passers-by. His favourite pastime, however, remained the chase.

Despite his outward serenity, the Prince lived rather a hectic existence. He was surrounded by a host of intrigues. No one dreamed of according the least value to the Wildbad Treaty and everyone was convinced that both the Sponeck and the de l'Espérance children had not lost their rights to their paternal heritage. Tragedy mingled with comedy, for there was even men-

<sup>1</sup> In the Prince's service we find a Frenchman, the Comte de la Verne, who on return from a mission abroad imitated his master's cynicism and did not fear to add as a postscript to his travel expense account 'for gambling and guls, whatever figure your Serene Highness thinks fit' (Duvernoy).

<sup>2</sup> The expenses of the table between 1st September 1720 and 1st January 1st 1721 amounted to nearly 4,000 livres, a sum which will seem quite reasonable when we consider that, over this period, were delivered to the royal kitchens '8,700 lb of meat and venison, 54 fat pigs, 91 hams, 30 sucking pigs, 1,224 lb of fish, 118 hares, 1,400 head of game, 1,400 head of poultry, geese, turkeys, chickens, etc.' In September 1720 the Prince fed 7,700 people at his court, in October 2,800, in November 3,500, etc (National Archives, Montbéliard K 1775)

tion of attempted poisonings by one or other of the mothers of their rivals' children.

To bring a little order into this confusion and to reconcile at least four of his bastards, Leopold-Eberhard found a solution which can be considered the epitome of his Moslem fanaticism: he decided, in accordance with 'the excellent Persian custom' to celebrate in his family a double incestuous marriage. In February 1719 was announced the marriage of Leopold, Count Sponeck, son of the Duke and Anna Sabina, to Charlotte, Countess of Coligny, named in the marriage contract 'daughter of the noble, Sandersleben' but in fact the daughter of the Duke and Henrietta Edwiga. On the following 31st August a second marriage was announced—if one can call it a marriage—between Karl-Leopold, Count of Coligny, son of the same Henrietta Edwiga, to Eberhardine von Sponeck, daughter of Anna Sabina<sup>1</sup>

As a result of these complicated marriages, the Prince, father of the four young people, became at the same time the father-in-law of two of his children . . . According to Saint Simon, 'he gave his affection to the first of these strange couples, assuring them as far as possible of the succession, and recognising them as the future sovereigns. All manner of roguery and falsification of the most complicated nature were employed to support the validity of these pretended marriages and to legitimise both the Sponecks, as issue of the one, and the de l'Espérances the issue of the other'

One can envisage the scandal provoked by this double marriage. Anna Sabina rebelled when she learned of the marriage of her two children to her husband's bastards. The country was infuriated by the cynical immorality of its sovereign. The news spread to Württemberg where Duke Eberhard-Ludwig protested vehemently against this manœuvre which was a breach of the recently concluded family pact. He insisted that the newly married couples should be deprived of the princely rank accorded them in such a brazen manner and in violation of the document signed at Wildbad. Leopold-Eberhard refused to be defeated. He embarked upon a campaign, which only death was to interrupt, with

<sup>1</sup> This particular couple has no history. The wife went mad shortly after her marriage and was sent to an asylum. The husband disappeared

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the object of obtaining official sanction to the rights of succession of his Sponeck children. After furnishing legal proof of the legality of his marriage to Anna Sabina, and the legitimacy of the children born in wedlock, he resolutely confirmed the eldest in his hereditary title of Prince of Montbéliard. In 1719 he went to Versailles, hoping to win the support of France in obtaining an annulment of the Treaty of Wildbad, or at least, in event of his failure, in ensuring his son a reasonable fortune. The Regent refused to arbitrate on the pretext that it was not his affair, and asked the Imperial Aulic Council for a decision. After eight months of fruitless effort Leopold-Eberhard left Paris with the jeers of the public ringing in his ears.

In November 1721 the Aulic Council annulled the titles which Sponeck had assumed and 'forbade the burghers of Montbéliard and the inhabitants of the County to recognise any of Leopold-Eberhard's children.'

A new decree by this Council, dated the 8th April 1723, maintained that 'all the children, those of Anna Sabina Hedwiger and Elizabeth Charlotte de l'Espérance, were unfit to assume their father's dignity', the same applying to the children of Henrietta Edwiga declared by the Duke, their father, 'to be natural children', and, finally, that the Württemberg branch 'was the sole heir to Montbéliard' (Mme d'Oberkirch). Leopold-Eberhard opposed this decision. He sent his son Sponeck to Vienna to defend his claims, but the Emperor refused to receive him except as a private individual.

The unfortunate plaintiff had not long returned to Montbéliard when in 1723 his father, whose health had been undermined by his disorderly life, had a stroke during a ball given for his illegitimate children. He was fifty-three. He lingered for three weeks during which his wife, Anna Sabina, hastened from Héricourt and, forgetting her resentment, nursed him with the most touching care, while Elizabeth Charlotte disappeared, abandoning the man whom she, too, called her husband.<sup>1</sup> Some maintained

<sup>1</sup> She retired to Clairval in France and died in Alsace in 1731. Her sons bore the name of de l'Espérance. In 1758 they relinquished their French properties and all their claims to the titles and arms of the

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that the Prince died in poverty, others, like Saint Simon, that he left a great deal of cash and precious stones. He had to be buried secretly. The scandals which had been a feature of his reign had aroused a sullen hatred among his subjects. It was feared that the coffin would be desecrated.

The day after his cousin's death Duke Eberhard-Ludwig of Württemberg prepared, in accordance with the Wildbad Treaty, to take possession of the County of Montbéliard. He immediately appointed as governor his chief minister, the Count von Gravenitz, the brother of the favourite who was at the height of her power. The Count of Sponeck tried to resist. He seized the keys to the city and the Schloss and took oaths of fidelity from his subjects. A few councillors and a group of burghers at first declared themselves to be his partisans but abandoned him in a cowardly manner as soon as his star seemed to be on the wane. Sponeck made a last protest to the Emperor against what he considered to be spoliation. His letters were 'returned to him with the arms of his seal and his signature cancelled' (Saint-Simon). At this moment the sons of Henrietta Edwiga de l'Espérance entered the lists, 'trying to exclude the Sponecks and to pose as the legitimate heirs' (*idem*). The Emperor, in a rage, declared all Leopold-Eberhard's children bastards without exception, and forbade them 'to bear the names and arms of Württemberg and the title of Montbéliard' (*idem*).

Finally French troops, under General de Montigny, were ordered to put an end to the matter. They laid siege to the town and the castle of Montbéliard. Sponeck was forced to capitulate. Held prisoner for some time, he was finally allowed to retire to Alsace. After the flight of Leopold-Eberhard's progeny it was discovered that all the jewels and objects of value mentioned in the dead man's inventory had disappeared from the palace, 'everything having been carried off by the wives and children of the late Duke'.<sup>1</sup>

princes of Montbéliard in exchange for a pension. The eldest took the name of Comte de Hornberg, the second, after a life of debauch, went mad, the youngest served in the French Army.

<sup>1</sup> National Archives, Montbéliard K 1775



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In spite of his setbacks, Sponeck refused to consider the cause irrevocably lost. In 1735 he went to Paris in an attempt to obtain a revocation of the Imperial sentence from the King of France. The Parlement, 'having no power over a German', prolonged the trial indefinitely 'in order to amuse the Emperor', who showed himself to be intractable. The case was finally heard before the Paris courts on the 23rd June 1735. According to Saint-Simon, Sponeck was treated 'even worse'. Although the legitimacy of his birth was not questioned, his right to the Montbéliard inheritance was seriously contested.

Sponeck and his wife, 'proved also to be his sister' according to Saint-Simon, lived in Paris where they abjured the Protestant faith in the archiepiscopal chapel. For this ceremony they had prevailed upon the Duc de Luynes and the Princesse de Carignan to be their godparents. The neophytes, concludes Saint-Simon, 'did not stir from Saint-Sulpice, the Jesuits and all the fashionable pious haunts. They were saints, despite their incest and their desire to expropriate the property of others'. The de Rohan family took up their cause in the hope of procuring the hand of the Sponeck son for one of their daughters, who would thus acquire the rank of a foreign princess. The Sponeck couple were very well received by the French nobility. 'He had a name and was wealthy. People did not inquire too closely into their origins' (Saint-Simon).

The result of the trial, which lasted until 1740, was disastrous and 'cast this infamous rabble back into the oblivion from which it should never have emerged' (Saint-Simon). On the 24th April of the same year, the French court, anxious to appease the Emperor, launched a general attack upon Sponeck. 'The misery of the vanquished and of their protectors was great' (Saint-Simon). Karl-Eugen, at this time ruling Duke of Württemberg, came to Versailles in 1748 to thank Louis XV for the moral support which he had given him in the question of the Montbéliard succession.

The following year Sponeck's adventurous career finished in a tragic manner when he broke his neck on the road from Paris to Versailles. His wife, with great impudence, although she no longer had the right to the name of Princesse de Montbéliard

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appeared in public with the full arms of Wurttemberg on her carriage 'She continued,' says Saint-Simon, 'to flaunt herself brazenly everywhere with a pair of breasts as big as drums which, in spite of her piety, she did not bother to hide'

Duke Eberhard-Ludwig of Wurttemberg paid several visits to the County with which he had been officially invested His successor Duke Karl-Alexander lost the habit of residing there In 1769 the eldest son of the latter, Karl-Eugen, entrusted the government of the principality to his younger brother Friedrich-Eugen, who held the appointment for twenty years Friedrich-Eugen led the frugal existence of a country squire at Montbéliard He brought life and prosperity to the County, and was benevolent to his subjects, who adored him <sup>1</sup>

A taste for the arts which had been dormant in the region seems to have been awakened under the Princess, *née* Brandenburg-Schwedt, Frederick the Great's niece She herself was an artist and painter with a certain talent

At the outset the Prince was obliged to install himself in a villa built in 1751 by Baron Gemmingen, this was temporarily put at his disposal until the work on the palace should be completed Several of the picturesque towers of the medieval building which had served as a court for the sovereigns of the country were destroyed, but the old bastions flanking the new castle were preserved The architecture is rather cold and can still be seen today.

The Princes of Montbéliard had never dreamed of having a country house. In 1770 Friedrich-Eugen decided to build one He chose Étupes, three miles east of Montbéliard and charmingly situated in fields and willow groves, through which ran a little stream The plans were drawn up in Stuttgart,<sup>2</sup> and the Prince

<sup>1</sup> A war wound forced Friedrich-Eugen to travel only in his carriage The good folk of Montbéliard respectfully saluted the Prince's carriage as soon as they saw it appear, whether it was occupied or empty

<sup>2</sup> It is probable that La Guépière, who as we have seen built so many palaces in Wurttemberg, had a hand in the plans of Étupes In Montbéliard he is known to have built the Rathaus With the Church of Saint Martin it adorns the present square, which has virtually remained unchanged

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entrusted the work to the architect Morel. The castle, built in less than a year according to contemporary documents, seems to have been lacking in accommodation and style. The main building with a bare nine windows contained the reception rooms. The Entrance Court was flanked by two huge wings, one of which contained a long gallery aping Versailles, and the other a small theatre.<sup>1</sup>

The interior decoration, carried out too hastily, was unpretentious. The appointments remained modest until 1776, the year Friedrich-Eugen married his daughter Dorothea to the Tsarevitch, the future Paul I, an epileptic who, when he was on the point of becoming reconciled with France, was assassinated in 1801.<sup>2</sup>

This unexpected marriage suddenly brought wealth to the Prince's family which, on the day of the ceremony, received from Catherine the Great a revenue of 60,000 livres and numerous presents of all kinds.

The gardens of Étupes, rather restricted in size, soon became as famous as those of Montefontaine, Ermenonville or Méréville.<sup>3</sup> They were terraced and their design was a combination of the French style and the new English fashion. The rather puerile sentimentality of the period, which often exceeded the bounds of good taste, insisted that they should be dotted with various structures and traversed by brooks trickling in cascades beneath Chinese bridges. At the side of an old summer-house built by Leopold-

<sup>1</sup> In 1802 the right wing still existed almost intact. The rest of the building had fallen in ruins.

<sup>2</sup> Princess Dorothea had originally been betrothed to the eldest son of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt. For political reasons Frederick II forced the fiancé to stand down in favour of the Russian Tsarevitch Dorothea, who became Tsarina in 1796 under the title Maria Fedorovna, was the mother of the Emperor Alexander I, Napoleon's enemy.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the work of Kraft *Plans des plus beaux jardins d'Angleterre, de France et d'Allemagne*, Strasbourg, 1809. According to this author, the architect Kléber had apparently been ordered to carry out the plans furnished by the Prince for the gardens of Étupes. Kléber, a pupil of Chalgrin, was at the time Inspector of Public Buildings at Belfort. Prior to 1792, the year he joined the Revolutionary armies, nothing pointed to the fact that this modest architect would rise to such heights in the military profession.

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Eberhard and known as the Tower because of its curious winding staircase, now stood an elegant villa surrounded by lawns of flowers, the Princess's favourite retreat, the woodcutter's hut, rustic in appearance but full of valuable furniture from Paris, the dairy farm in the form of a Swiss chalet; a temple of Flora with rose trellises and a tall column dedicated 'to the Absent', a vast orangery, said to be one of the finest in Europe and which, on occasion, could be transformed into a theatre; an aviary full of rare birds, a grotto whose coloured crystal stalactites took on a fairy-like quality when illuminated, and a maze reached by a triumphal arch made of Roman ruins discovered nearby at Mandeur. Finally, perched on a steep rock opposite the castle, the anchorites' hermitage where Friedrich-Eugen studied his Plutarch.<sup>1</sup>

In the immediate neighbourhood of Étupes on the Delle road near Exincourt was another small country villa called 'Les Réveries' built by the Princess. It consisted of a salon and two simply decorated boudoirs whose windows opened on to gardens full of flowers and bushes, relieved by statues and vases. They have all disappeared.

At Étupes, the court of Friedrich-Eugen, despite his vast retinue of butlers, couriers, trumpeters, and a small, well-drilled guard, remained intimate and exempt from etiquette.<sup>2</sup> Friedrich-Eugen, father of ten children, seemed to have been mainly preoccupied in educating this large progeny. He corresponded with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose principles for teaching children had been adopted throughout Europe. Among the replies which the author of *Émile* addressed to the Prince is the famous letter whose opening sentence is worth quoting:

'Were I unfortunate enough to have been born a Prince, to be fettered by my status and forced to have a retinue, a suite and servants, that is to say, masters, and that nevertheless, I had a sufficiently elevated soul to wish to be a man despite my rank,

<sup>1</sup> Dr Berdot *Voyage de Montbéliard à Potsdam*, 1775

<sup>2</sup> The accounts of the Court of Montbéliard never mention tobacco as an item. It was probably forbidden to smoke or to take snuff in the castle. Nor is there any mention of soap. Did they wash? Possibly. But then only the tips of their fingers' (National Archives, Montbéliard K 1775)

a wish to fulfil the great duties of father, husband and citizen of the human republic, I should soon feel great difficulties in reconciling all this, particularly in educating my children to the state ordained for them by nature, despite that which they have among their peers

The Prince's entourage was composed of serious-minded, cautious, austere and somewhat boring people. The philosophers, the ancient and the very modern historians were read a great deal. Great interest was taken in new discoveries, such as Mesmer's magnetism and the Montgolfier brothers' attempts to fly in balloons. However, the season at Étupes always became more animated on the visit of some person of mark: the Emperor Joseph II; Karl-Eugen of Wurtemberg and his wife the Countess of Hohenheim, who stayed there for four months in 1771, the Elector of Cologne, Prince Henry of Prussia, Frederick II's brother, the Prince of Hesse, the Duke of Brunswick, the Margrave of Ansbach with his mistress Lady Craven, and many others.

In August 1782 Friedrich-Eugen received his daughter and son-in-law, the Tsarevitch Paul. For this sensational occasion the tables of the palace were laden with victuals requisitioned in haste from all parts of the country. A series of fêtes offered to the Imperial couple occupy many pages in the *Mémoires* of Mme d'Oberkuch.

At Étupes, scholars and famous literary men were assured of a warm welcome, and included Lavater, the Abbé Raynal and Dr Tronchin of Geneva. La Harpe stayed there frequently but his rather too obvious vanity and caustic wit were not found particularly agreeable by this peaceful little court.<sup>1</sup> The Chevalier Florian, on the contrary, was very popular. 'He was an amusing, very gay man from Languedoc who could tell a lacy story. He was

<sup>1</sup> A few verses addressed by La Harpe in 1781 to their Serene Royal Highnesses at Étupes reflect the patriarchal life at the Court of Montbéliard.

*Que ces lieux fortunés ont des maîtres aimables!  
 Quel spectacle nouveau! J'ai vu, dans ce séjour,  
 Le bonheur que l'on croit étranger à la cour  
 Et les antiques mœurs que l'on traite de fables  
 Que la simplicité sied bien à la grandeur!*

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short and stocky with a big round head and looked a trifle common ' The gentle, gallant poet recited his graceful verses to the court and his sentimental writings were a pleasant contrast to the philosophical theories which had recently come from France and were considered subversive

Then the revolutionary era arrived A few days after the taking of the Bastille, the population of Montbéliard took refuge in the capital to make an armed stand against French patriots A few *émigrés* entered the region and, not feeling that they were in a foreign country, went straight through The Marquise de Lage and young Polastion, who accompanied her, were mistaken for the Queen and the Dauphin As soon as the Princess of Montbéliard was informed of their arrival she sent squires and chamberlains to offer them the hospitality of her castle.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1792, Friedrich-Eugen, terrified by the turn of events in France, sent his fortune and his most precious furniture to Wurttemberg for safe custody As soon as he learned of the disastrous flight to Varennes he decided to return to his own country, to the despair of a population which loved its princes and feared nothing so much as a change of ruler or of policy Events were not long delayed In September 4,000 French troops entered Montbéliard armed with pitchforks and took the garrison prisoner Officers from Belfort proclaimed that 'all peoples who fought against slavery would receive help from France' On the 10th October 1793 appeared the People's Representative, Bernard de Saintes, sent by the Convention to Montbéliard to establish French law in the country. His first visit was to the mayor, to whom he made a brief speech 'I bring you liberty,' he declared 'You are wrong,' replied that worthy man 'We have known liberty for longer than you have, and a liberty as complete as possible It has been one of the virtues of our princes We feel nothing except gratitude for them.' 'Not a word more,' said the representative, 'my cannon are outside'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Marquise de Lage *Souvenirs*

<sup>2</sup> The guillotine claimed no victims in Montbéliard According to local chronicles a cat was guillotined to ensure that the instrument was in working order and to intimidate the population by the sight of blood

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The local revolutionary party, which grew more and more threatening, insisted that trees of liberty should be planted by the townsmen, apprentice *sans-culottes* who felt little enthusiasm for the new gospel. Finally, it imposed French law on the County of Montbéliard which, cut off from Wurtemberg, was a few years later attached to France by the Treaty of Lunéville (1801). Thus what was annexation pure and simple became an accomplished fact, 'it was the end of a county which had continued as an independent state for more than 750 years' (Mme d'Oberkirch). The Revolution, considering Friedrich-Eugen as an *émigré*, confiscated and nationalized all his domains. The little furniture which still remained in the castles of Montbéliard and Étupes was put up to auction in December 1793, or burnt on the orders of Bernard de Saintes. All that survived the disaster was a portrait of Friedrich-Eugen which is in the city museum today.

Étupes was bought for 25,000 livres by a Belfort Jew named Dreyfus who installed a cloth factory in it only to demolish it on the orders of the Convention which had just decreed the destruction of all buildings that recalled the loathed régime. With the materials from it, houses were built in the neighbourhood and gradually all trace vanished of the charming domain which today is marked only by a tumbledown wall.

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